

KENDALL'S SISTER

ROBERT SWASEY

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“I want you to know — you have got to know — that I
love you.” FRONTISPIECE. See page 185.

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BY
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WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
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TO
MY MOTHER

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KENDALL'S SISTER

CHAPTER I

Conversation around the dinner table in the Kendall home had not been flowing with its usual ease; and a remark from the gentleman whom Florence Wainwright, the hostess, had met for the first time that evening, to the effect that he always liked lavender gowns on ladies, "especially the color of the one you have on which suits you first-rate"—referring thus directly to Mrs. Wainwright and what she was wearing—caused a distinct pause in the proceedings. There had been a number of these pauses; and Max Kendall, Florence's brother, was beginning to wish that he had not invited Jim Delane, his partner in business, to dinner with himself and his sister at their Marlborough Street home.

Mrs. Wainwright, who looked extremely well in her pale violet gown and not a day older than thirty-five, which was her age, rose to the occasion with a quietly murmured, "It is a pretty color, isn't it?"—realizing at the same time that however clever this good-looking young man might be in a business way, he certainly had much to learn in the sixth, or social, sense.

The little group at the table consisted of Florence

Wainwright, her brother Max, Constance Floyd, who was a friend of Florence, and Delane. Mrs. Wainwright had purposely arranged not to have anything like a formal dinner party for the night her brother should bring Delane to the house, as neither of them was too sure of what impression the gentleman might make when taken out of his *milieu*, which was business spelled with a capital "B." This was the first time that Mrs. Wainwright had met the young man of whom she had heard so much, and her misgivings were proving correct. Delane was good-humored, good-looking in a usual sort of way; and his manners did not belie his looks. He meant what he said, but in his embarrassment he became a trifle more emphatic in his effort to please than is considered strictly good form in the most correct circles.

"I don't mean to say," began Miss Floyd, to break the pause which had followed Delane's last remark, "that you don't try to seek and remedy the causes of poverty; but I think it is too much outside the grasp of your usual course of life for you to do much to alleviate the evil by merely stirring up the surface."

This was in reference to something that had been said about Mrs. Wainwright's work in the slums.

"So you think my visits to the South End cause only a ripple on the surface," Florence laughed.

"Yes, I am afraid I do," Miss Floyd returned.

"Why be afraid?" Max Kendall put in. "It is just what I have been telling Florence for a year.

I wish she would chuck the whole thing. Would you believe it," he went on, turning to Delane, "that this pretty sister of mine has been out the whole afternoon in this outrageous weather trying to locate an old woman in some back alley with seventeen children."

"Seven, my dear," Florence interrupted.

"It's all the same," Max continued. "You get just as wet hunting up seven children as seventeen."

"But how do you hear of these weird places?" Miss Floyd asked.

"I am working at present with a committee on the housing problem," Florence replied quite seriously. "Since the overcrowded condition of our cities has existed and the lack of available living quarters, there is a congestion and cramming of tenements and lodging houses which is not only very bad from the point of view of health but rather dangerous as far as the morals of the community are concerned."

Florence, coming home late to dinner with very wet feet and considerably tired—as she herself confessed—had caused a discussion as to just how much of real service a person situated in life as Mrs. Wainwright was could be in settlement house or social welfare work.

For a year, ever since her return from France, she had been devoting herself with untiring faith to the cause of the poor; and the longer she worked in the slums and the better she knew the conditions, the more lively became her enthusiasm. At first it

had been merely a question of something to divert her mind after her four years of hospital work in the war and her husband's death at the front. Like many other women, she could not slip back from the arduous labors and unceasing work of the past few years into the idleness and pettiness of ordinary everyday life. From conducting sewing classes at one of the mission schools and teaching girls to read the English language, Florence had gone on steadily to the really bigger phases of settlement-house work; and at this time she was carrying on investigations, in connection with committees in other large cities, as to the matter of adequate and proper housing of the poor,—a thing becoming every day more important as city populations swelled and houses dwindled to the vanishing point. There was extra work for her now due to the enormous amount of unemployment which was the direct result of ruthless profiteering on the part of manufacturers, causing a tremendous overstocking of goods of every description which the public either had refused or been unable to purchase at the prevailing high prices.

The former years of Florence Kendall's life had been very different from the activities of her present days. She had been married under the happiest circumstances to a man who worshiped her. Jack Wainwright and his wife went to Paris to live. Florence had been educated in France, and as Wainwright's business called him there, the situation was a very pleasant one for both of them.

They settled down in what one might call connubial bliss, in spite of the fact that no children appeared on the scene; but of course that has nothing to do in these progressive days with happiness in the married state. But the happy life in Paris, like a thousand other similar arrangements, was all to end in the cataclysm of the war. Jack had taken up the study of aviation in the early days of that sport. Florence opposed it, thinking flying far too dangerous to be indulged in for mere fun of the thing, much as one plays tennis or golf. Wainwright, however, went into the sport head over heels, which was literally true, as he became something of an expert in the flying game. Then the war began; and it was a very quick step, or rather flight, into the serious business of the aviation corps. The always dashing and exceedingly good-looking Jack made a very smart officer as a member of the Lafayette Escadrille; and his wife was duly proud of him. Of course the dangers of flying seemed much more remote to her when one was up in the air with bombs and things whizzing about than in the old days when she held her breath as her husband calmly sailed over the Bois de Boulogne and the suburbs beyond. Florence, meantime, had become a nurse; first at the big hospital at Neuilly-sur-Seine and later in the ones nearer the battle front. Towards the end of the war she had known the harrowing work of the advanced dressing stations. And it was not until nearly the end of the war that Jack Wainwright was killed when flying at night

over the German lines. Florence was inconsolable. In the old days before 1914 she probably would have collapsed. Instead, after the Armistice she returned to Paris and tried to pick up the threads of her life in some small way, still doing valuable work of one sort or another for the war sufferers. But the recollection of the happy times in Paris was too keen. Besides, she remembered that her brother, also returned from service, was at home alone in the old Marlborough Street house. She felt that her place was in Boston, her duty to be met there rather than in the varied and extended work which she might continue to do in France.

In the spring of 1919 she came back to America and settled down with her brother. Florence's parents had been dead many years, and it seemed a pleasant and wholly desirable arrangement that she should make a home for her bachelor brother. The first few months in Boston, however, had been very dreary for her. She did not care to go about socially, and Max Kendall had never been inclined to that sort of thing. And then Florence realized how difficult it was to go from an active life of high purpose with the enthralling work that went with it, into a life the purpose of which, however high, had as its only expression long evenings by the fireside with Max or an informal party and game of bridge, both things meaning rather fearful boredom to the young widow. Her nerves, like the nerves of so many other women fresh from war work, had not stopped vibrating. Would the nerves of any

one ever calm down again to the old placidity of life? Florence had friends who dabbled in social service work at the Peabody House and other similar institutions. She became interested in their pursuits. From that she had gone on to her present labors, which took nearly every moment of her time and filled her life with a new incentive.

To-night, the rather superficial Constance Floyd had insisted that Florence had not got any deeper into the matter in spite of her enthusiasm. Miss Floyd belonged to that large group of persons who think the poor cannot be assisted from without; any lasting effect upon their condition must be an outgrowth from within.

"But the poor cannot help themselves," Florence pleaded.

"You will admit they are their own worst enemies," Miss Floyd went on.

"Yes; and who of us is not?" Max put in, coming to the aid of his sister.

"The condition of poverty is something inside a man," Delane said.

Max and Miss Floyd looked at each other, smiling, wondering how Florence would take this.

Delane continued, "I mean one man is inclined to poverty just as another chap has the strength of character and will power which keep him on the top of things. Of course you can buy coal and wood for the down-and-outs and teach the children to wash their faces, but how are you going to alter any one's character by doing that?"

"It seems to me that in these days of the high cost of living, people like ourselves are the only real down-and-outs," Max interrupted.

"It is like this," Delane began again. "You know lots of men who lounge about clubs and are able to do little more than spend their income; but their friends say they are jolly good fellows. Well, the loafer that used to sit half the evening in the corner saloon over his five-cent glass of beer and dirty sheet of newspaper is your club man of the slums. They are birds of a feather."

After the difficulty which Delane had had earlier in the evening with the small talk of the dinner table, it was very interesting to Max to hear him coming out with such definite ideas. He looked across at his sister with an approving expression, "You see, in spite of your notion of him, this friend and partner of mine is not such a bore as you thought him."

"It is simply my own personal belief that little can be done in curing this disease of poverty while the souls of men are what they are," Miss Floyd said suddenly, having a feeling that Delane was about to walk off with her own pet theory, and that it was quite time for her to get back into the conversation. She had not cared much for Mr. Delane since he made the "*faux pas*" about Florence's gown.

"Then it is our business to change the souls of men," Florence replied.

"How are you going to do it?" Max asked. "Never, in my opinion, by merely building better

homes for the bodies of men and giving them purer food and warmer clothing."

"Cheaper food would be more to the point," Delane broke in.

"But aren't we what we are on account of the generations of suitable environment which we have had?" Florence asked. "It is monstrous to say that improving the actual living conditions of people does not better the people themselves."

"Some of us are very little better because of our environment," Delane said quietly. "You often hear of sons of excellent families who go smash because their souls aren't right."

Florence looked quickly at her friend Constance. This was awkward ground, as Miss Floyd's life had been nearly ruined by a scapegrace brother who squandered the family money and after a wild career on both sides of the Atlantic passed into oblivion somewhere on the shores of the Mediterranean.

"But those cases can have little to do with providing soup kitchens for the poor," Miss Floyd said, laughing.

"You are very old-fashioned, my dear," Florence put in. "Since the closing of the saloons, soup kitchens have become almost a relic of the past. Even some of the cheap lodging houses—the hotels where the homeless man of former days could obtain a bed for twenty-five cents—have closed down because of lack of patronage."

"I am very glad to hear it," Miss Floyd replied, as the little group arose from the dinner table. "It

makes one believe that we are approaching the millennium, does it not?"

The tone of sarcasm in her voice displeased Delane who, struck with admiration for Mrs. Wainwright, felt he must take up the cudgels in her defense.

"We will never get there," he said, "until every one takes hold,—the lookers-on as well as the workers."

Over the coffee in the drawing-room the conversation took a lighter turn; and then Kendall went with Delane into his study to talk over some business matters. These two men were so absorbed in the subject of land development in a certain outlying district of the city that their thoughts, whether in the daytime or after office hours at night, seldom roamed from the topic.

A franchise was discussed which was likely to be granted by the next legislature to a certain railway company, in order that this company might lay its tracks through the place where the land holdings were. Crofton, whom Delane mentioned, was a member of the State legislature from Boston; an Irishman with an unlimited gift of talk which, in combination with a massive lower jaw, had won for him many causes political and otherwise. Delane stood well with the Crofton crowd, and Max was trusting largely to his influence in this quarter to bring the matter of the franchise to a successful conclusion. After a most promising talk and feeling that things never had looked brighter for them, Ken-

dall opened a bottle of Scotch which he had obtained a few days before through the channels which have become so popular in these dry days for the sale and traffic in liquor.

Miss Floyd, left alone with Florence, wanted to know more about Delane. She had heard in a vague sort of way about Max going into business with a very rich and successful person who, it was supposed, would accomplish great things. Like Florence, she had never met him until to-night.

"How did Max happen to know him?" she asked.

"It was one of those things that just happened," Florence said. "A year ago we were in an awful hole financially. Max owned a big piece of land in one of the suburbs which was not developing, and he did not have the money to do anything with it by himself. The taxes were an awful drain on our already diminished resources; and as Max was unable to sell, things looked pretty black. At one time we thought we must give up this place."

Miss Floyd gave a little gasp of sympathy at the possibility of such a dreadful event, as the Kendall house on Marlborough Street was distinctly one of the substantial homes of the city, and the Kendalls themselves no less substantial in the Boston world.

Mrs. Wainwright continued, "Then Delane appeared on the scene, very rich and ready to go in with Max in this land scheme. Of course I did not know him, but I have told my brother it was only decent to ask him to the house some night even if

there is bound to be very little in common between us outside of the business connection."

"Surely there were men of Max's own class who would have furnished him with the necessary capital," Constance interrupted.

"Possibly," Florence answered. "But those men seldom dare to take big risks and have not always the proper influences to pull through such schemes as this. Delane, being an Irishman, has power in the political world. He expects to get an electric car line put through this property, which of course will mean its success."

"I see," Constance remarked vaguely; "Max and Delane hold the land together."

"Yes, I believe so," Florence continued. "My brother had to mortgage it to Delane, owing to his financial straits; but it is a sort of partnership, and the two men will share equally in the profits. It looks most promising at present. They have taken an office in State Street and are known as the Greenvale Holding Company. Greenvale is the name of the new settlement. Just now the place is a wide tract of gray barren land with the usual dejected appearance of the outskirts of a great city; scarcely a green vale, as Max says there isn't a blade of grass on the premises, the whole thing being a wilderness of ash cans and stagnant pools of water; but all that will be changed, and the desert will blossom."

"I certainly hope so," Miss Floyd said a little dubiously, thinking to herself that a place as dismal

as the one her friend had described might need a good deal of blossoming before the dividends would grow.

There was a pause. Then Florence said, "It was largely on this account—that the prospects look so bright now—that Max wanted to have Delane here."

"But I should think anything Max wants to do for him in the social line could be managed at his club."

"Oh, he has done a lot in that way. Max got him into one of his clubs. Delane is rather liked on State Street; men don't object to his sort of *gaucherie*."

"I suppose his family is quite impossible," Miss Floyd pursued.

"Probably," Florence answered. "He has a mother and a very rich father in the tobacco business. They spend their summers at an unfashionable place on Cape Cod. There is also a sister who is a bit of a flyaway from what I have heard. Max says his house in Dorchester is a model of everything a house should not be. It is furnished and decorated like a Pullman car."

"Thoroughly dull," Constance interposed.

"I don't deny it," Florence went on; "but we must be nice to him. We must accept him for what he is. You see it is a matter of bread and butter for us."

Just then the two men came back. Florence had a better chance now to really see Delane, as he stood rather ill at ease in the middle of the room, not quite sure which chair he would take or what he should

say, than she had had during dinner, as he sat at her side in the dimly lighted dining room.

Delane was tall and very straight and had dark hair, rather curly over the forehead. His nose was inclined to be retroussé, but his mouth and chin were clean-cut and firm. In all, rather a good figure of a man, with broad shoulders and well-built body. His clothes were too aggressively smart to be exactly in good taste, and the diamond ring on his hand and diamond and pearl scarf-pin a little flamboyant; but these things belonged essentially to the type,—Delane suggested the large and brilliant effect both in clothes and jewelry.

He sat down near Florence, while Miss Floyd and Max chatted quietly in another part of the room.

"You and my brother are so closely connected in your interests," Florence began, "that it is a pity we have not seen you here before."

Delane, sitting very straight in his chair, smiled broadly and said that he often had meant to come to see Mrs. Wainwright.

"And how are things going?" Florence asked, realizing that her only sure approach to this man would be through the channel of his every-day affairs.

"Never better," Delane replied with enthusiasm. "It is marvelous what we are going to do with that land."

"How wonderful it must be," Florence interposed, "to have a great venture like yours to swing and to see things going as you wish."

"It certainly is," Delane said. "You see, our land will take a great boom as soon as we get the railway put through to it. The electric car line stops now two and a half miles this side of Greenvale. Of course, there is nothing doing until the cars go out there."

"I should think not," Florence replied, trying to seem as interested as possible. The details of this land venture of her brother had always been rather hazy to her.

"But we shall win out in the end, or my name is not Jim Delane."

His easy assurance of the possibilities of the thing were so typical of the man, and so little like Max, who had from the first been reticent and unassuming concerning the land he owned, that Florence was somewhat annoyed. Certainly, confidence was necessary—it was through Delane's faith in the scheme that Max had been able to go forward—but this attitude of Delane was so self-assured, so overconfident, as it seemed to Florence, that she felt a little insecure in the situation.

"But there must be obstacles to overcome," she ventured.

"Obstacles? Certainly," Delane replied almost brusquely. "But what are obstacles to two husky young fellows like me and your brother? It is our object to overcome them; to make Greenvale a big, hustling suburb."

There was a movement in the back part of the room. Miss Floyd came forward to ask if she

might go into the library and look at a new book of war etchings. Evidently the social attack of Delane was too much for her sensitive nature.

"Of course," Max said. "You will find the portfolio in the drawer of the big table."

Miss Floyd disappeared with quiet nods to Florence and Delane.

"Do you really enjoy your settlement work?" Delane asked, after a pause.

"Oh, yes, I am quite absorbed in it," Florence replied gayly.

"I am afraid," Delane continued, "that all this slumming business has very few attractions for me. We had to change a tire on my machine the other night over in one of those dirty streets where I suppose your work takes you, and I assure you I was glad when we got out. Such a gang of hoodlums and thugs I never saw as gathered around my car."

Florence smiled placidly. No doubt there were abysses in the man. She looked at Max a moment, a certain feeling of pity coming over her that it had been necessary for him to become associated with Delane. How difficult it must be, she thought, in spite of the fact that Max liked his partner and always said he was "a bully good sort." She would try another tack.

"Do you care for music, Mr. Delane?" she asked. "My friend Miss Floyd sings delightfully. Like all amateurs, she pretends to be shy about it; but perhaps we can persuade her to give us a song."

"I guess I don't know much about music beyond

what I get on the talking machine," Delane responded. "My sister has got a mighty fine Victrola made like a table in one of those French periods. It matches the furniture in our parlor at home."

"But one may hear excellent music in that way," Florence went on.

"Yes; you can if you want to. Ragtime suits me best."

"I am with you there," Max put in.

There was an awkward pause while Delane sat looking at Florence, completely taking her in, as it were. He had no intention of rudeness, but his very pleasure in the soft shining quality of her personality was so absorbing to him that he little realized how his interest manifested itself in a too apparent intentness.

The theater, which lately had offered Boston a medley of plays dealing for the most part with bedrooms and mixed-up married couples—the plots often built around nothing more material than a lost or stolen undergarment—was touched upon by Florence in her effort to lead the conversation and stop Delane's contemplative admiration of herself; but to little effect. It was not so much that Delane was not responsive; but his eagerness to approach each new topic with enthusiasm, however casual his interest in it, struck the wrong note and made it impossible for Florence to swing the situation with ease. She would have been glad if Miss Floyd had returned. The conversation dragged. A deadly

dullness settled upon the room, which Max could do little to lift, not being a fluent talker.

At last, looking at his watch, Delane jumped up.

"I have to meet my sister at ten o'clock at the Back Bay station," he said.

After the formal leave-taking, a hearty grasp of Kendall's hand and the wish from Mrs. Wainwright that he should come again to see them, Delane got away and proceeded in a very new and elaborate limousine to the station. On the way he thought a good deal of the dinner party and his introduction to Florence Wainwright. She represented to him a totally new type of person. She was quite unlike what he had supposed she would be. The simplicity of her manner and graceful hospitality were in direct contradiction to what had always been his idea of so-called smart women,—or, as he would have said, "Swells." His experiences in society had been mainly among over-dressed women and loud-voiced men encountered in the social gatherings of certain friends of his sister. Florence did not fit into that class of persons at all. He had dreaded the visit to Marlborough Street and had delayed it as long as he thought proper after Max's suggestion that he should "drop in" some night. A stereotyped picture of the "society lady" in the precincts of her home, familiar to him from novelettes in the ten-cent all-story magazines, had caused this dread of approach in the heart of the young financier. To find Mrs. Wainwright a most charming person, without the slightest trace of affectation or

stand-offishness, was decidedly disconcerting, but very pleasant indeed; for now Delane felt he would be able to go to the Kendall home as often as he liked. Certainly, he thought, Mrs. Wainwright meant it when she said that he must come to see her again. Perhaps she would like his sister. But here, turning into the cavernous vault of the station and hearing the rumble of the train below, his thoughts on the subject were interrupted; and he hurried down the broad flight of stairs to the train platform to greet his sister, returning resplendent in furs and diamonds from a shopping trip to New York.

It was necessary that a somewhat hearty supper should be eaten at the large hotel near by before the return home was undertaken, as Miss Delane had had nothing since tea at the Biltmore, not being able to abide dining cars. Jim Delane talked of Max and Florence,—especially of Florence; and gave a rather glowing picture of the hospitality shown him by the Kendalls.

"We must have them out to the house some night," Nora Delane said, as she looked over the menu to find something to eat which should be sufficiently showy and expensive.

"Yes," Jim said, "I was thinking about that. We ought to entertain them in bang-up style."

"They probably won't come, though," continued Miss Delane, a trifle disgusted at finding the simplest things on the card so high in price that the time had passed when you could splurge a bit by ordering a

rather unusual dish. "They are all snobs at heart," she went on.

"Not those two," Jim answered. "Max is a corking fellow. I know that from the way he has treated me in our business relations; and that sister of his, Mrs. Wainwright, is one fine girl."

"I suppose she had a swell gown on."

"Well, no, that's the funny part. Her dress was pretty enough, but nothing like as nice as the things you wear, Nora."

"I'll have to meet her, Jim."

"Sure; I'll take you over to see her some time."

The supper was finished, the motor called, and Delane and his sister whirled back to Dorchester in the mud and rain, splashing numerous people on the way.

CHAPTER II

Florence was out early the next morning to join the committee of three of the Housing Problem Association who were scheduled to inspect a group of congested lodging houses in the South End of the city. It was a matter somewhat different in character from the usual slum proposition, as this district might be designated the underworld of the slums. The comparatively healthy poor with their hordes of children in the North End, a very densely populated section, were in a different class from these dwellers in lodging houses. There was a noticeable lack of children in these quarters, and here the smudge of poverty was emphasized by the smear of immorality.

There were really six people to do this work,—the name "Committee of Three" arising from some similar group which had carried on this branch of investigation in New York. In Boston there was a director of the matter in hand, called over from New York especially for it; two experienced workers from the Trumbull Square House in close consultation with the head; and Florence and two older women from the Back Bay part of town who were perhaps as zealous in their efforts as their more professional associates, but who were considered rather

in the light of interlopers by them,—with the exception of Mrs. Wainwright whose complete seriousness in the business had won for her the confidence of the experienced men and women of the settlement houses.

She joined the others about ten o'clock; and the little party, breaking up into three divisions, proceeded to various addresses which the head of the group had typed on sheets of rather dirty paper.

Florence and a young Harvard graduate from the Trumbull Square House first visited number 10 Canticle Street. At one time this house had been a fine mansion of the South End, and the laundry in the basement and shoe-polishing parlors next door did not wholly prevent the brown-stone front under its present dinginess from giving a vague hint of its better days. The landlady answered the questions put to her in a surly manner, and it was with difficulty that Florence and her companion elicited the information that there were ten more people living in the house than properly belonged there. All the rooms seemed to be shared by three and sometimes four persons,—mostly shopgirls, telephone operators and young men of varied occupations. The halls were dark and narrow, and the fire escape at the back of the house was in such a precarious condition that Florence thought death by suffocation would be preferable to a descent down its hazardous steps.

Other houses in this neighborhood were gone through, always in the face of the opposition of the landladies, sometimes most graphically expressed.

It was noticeable that none of these houses contained a parlor or reception room of any sort where a girl might receive her friends. No wonder, thought Florence, that the streets of our cities are crowded at night by loafers and street walkers. The hall bedroom hurls its occupant into the street and none too seldom to the gutter. One landlady, upon being asked if it were not possible to set aside a room on the ground floor for the general use of her lodgers, said—giving Mrs. Wainwright a sidelong glance full of meaning—that the people living in her house were not “swells” but plain working girls who paid for a room and did not get more than they paid for.

Florence looked down the dirty street and went on to the next place. Mr. Wyman, the young college graduate, made copious notes after each investigation. In figures and comparison of statistics he seemed to take great comfort, constantly mentioning police laws regulating the matter of adequate fire protection or the placing of bathrooms and number of persons to a room; and Florence was amazed at the limited scope of his vision which did not appear to go beyond the closely written pages of his notebook. To her the significance of the matter lay in another direction. The appalling outcome of our civilization in the way life is stripped bare of amusement and diversion for the masses, was never more apparent to her than in the stuffy corridors of these cheap lodging houses. There seemed to be nothing for the dwellers in these places but the moving-picture theaters and the streets; and the “movies,”

catering nearly always to the primitive emotions, only served the most transient needs of man in his search for amusement and diversion. The saloons had been taken away from the men,—to the advantage of many of them, it must be admitted, but what would be given in their place? To Florence it seemed as though civilization were so intent at the present time in making mankind better that it had quite overlooked the fact that entertainment is no small function of society.

At one particular house which advertised rooms for transients and where the negro in charge would not vouchsafe a word of information other than that she had fulfilled all the police regulations and would on no account show them through the premises, both Florence and Mr. Wyman realized at once that the lodgers here were not the sort that came under their particular investigations at the present time. As they were standing on the doorstep a little undecided as to whether they would go to luncheon now—it was after one—or continue their work a bit longer, a reddish-haired girl in a dark street dress came out of the house. She looked curiously at the couple as she came slowly down the steep flight of steps; and as she passed Florence, half turned and smiled.

“Didn’t they have a room for you, dearie?” she asked. “Try number 25.”

There was something about the face of the girl with its rather soft white skin and bright eyes that caused Florence to smile back at her. Before she

realized whether she wanted to speak or not, she had said, "Do you live here?"

Young Wyman was obviously embarrassed and started to say something to Florence about going to lunch, when the girl, still smiling pleasantly, turned quickly to him and said, "Nix on the lunch, kid. Can't you see the lady has asked me a question?" Then, speaking to Mrs. Wainwright again with the same bright manner, "No, I don't live here; but I stayed here last night.

Wyman, more ill at ease than ever, went down the remaining steps to the sidewalk. Florence and the girl stood looking at each other.

"Who's your friend, dearie?" she asked, winking toward the retreating figure.

Florence, not heeding the question, said, "Is your home in this neighborhood?"

The girl laughed at this and replied that she had a room near by.

"I share one with a friend over in the next street. Say," she went on with a sudden inspiration, "if she ain't there now, you and yer young man can have it for a dollar."

This was the finishing stroke for Wyman, who now turned around quickly from his meditation of the curbstone.

"We had better go to luncheon, Mrs. Wainwright," he said; "you look fearfully tired."

"Here, kid," the girl broke in, coming down to the sidewalk, "don't try to put any of that 'Mrs.' business over on me."

"Good-by," Florence said, as she joined her companion.

"Good-by. So you don't want the room?" she called after them as they hurried away.

The girl stood a moment watching them.

"That's damned queer!" she finally said, and turned on her heel and started off down the street.

Florence went home to luncheon, having agreed to join the committee of three for further rambles in the afternoon. The streets were hot and close, and as she walked along, she felt very tired and dirty,—a physical feeling of uncleanness having taken hold of her, due probably to the moral swamps through which her mind had wandered that morning. The work was very taxing at times; Florence was by no means strong, and it was this fact that so often had created astonishment in her brother that she should wish to proceed in her reforming efforts with so much zeal. This noon especially her task seemed almost hopeless. The character of the South End houses and the brief scene with the girl had had a depressing effect. Certainly in all this situation something was needed beside investigations and committee reports, something beyond laws not to do this and not to do that and the various lodging-house acts. The moral nature of people must be changed.

The work in the afternoon consisted largely of talk,—discussions among the various members of the committee as to what was to be done with all the statistics and material they had gathered. A constant reference to the authority vested in the police

appeared to be the rock upon which the committee placed its faith. When Florence finally left the group about five o'clock and stood waiting for the car which would take her home, she had a curious feeling that the gloom hanging over this part of town was somehow heavier and more depressing than anything she had known in the battle zone of France. At one time she had worked very near the front and had experienced what it was like to be actually under fire. But she had never felt then anything like the gloom that seemed to come down and almost smother her as she stood now on this street corner. Over there, in the midst of the horror and disorder, dirt and death, she had felt an uplift,—a courage that came with her duties; but here it took a tremendous amount of courage to keep her going on with her work.

There was mud, mud,—mud everywhere. The streets oozed with the black, slimy stuff, and the sidewalk, where many sticky feet had left imprints, looked like a part of the roadway. Near the electric car tracks the cobblestones were broken and irregular, and puddles of water glistened, reflecting the cold blue arc light above. Even the houses themselves had a muddy aspect, which was their usual appearance in this section of town. The bricks were blackened by the accumulated dirt of the neighborhood; and the effect of murky dreariness was heightened by the gloom produced by the structure of the elevated railway which, like a black serpent, hung over the road. On the best of days little light could

get into the street, shrouded by this hideous, curving snake of iron which belched forth thunderous trains at frequent intervals, adding to the din of drays and cars below. But to-day was the worst of days, and the very air breathed mud and filth and smoke and slime. The street was packed with heavy carts driven by cursing drivers who hurled their imprecations in broken English at things and people getting in their way.

"Look what you're about, you slob!" a girl cried in a shrill voice, as she hesitated between two wagons, and the driver of one of the wagons spat down almost upon her.

"Excuse me dearie," the man on the cart answered, grinning at the girl and watching her feet and ankles as she went on.

"I'll dearie you, if you don't look what you're about," the girl mumbled, hurrying through an opening in the traffic.

She crossed over near Florence and passed by rapidly, not recognizing her acquaintance of a few hours before on the door stoop of the house. But Florence saw at once that it was the same girl who had spoken to her and had tried to aid her in a rather ambiguous situation.

She was slight and short; had rather reddish-yellow hair, and wore a dark suit and small black hat on the side of which was a red wing of somewhat faded plumage. Her dress was smartly cut but dirty around the bottom, and the jacket was wrinkled and slightly spotted on the collar and

cuffs. She was not essentially pretty, yet her face was so absolutely without character and her skin so white that the effect was pleasing in a negative sort of way. The features were regular, although the nose was too small for the rather large eyes and mouth. One would have been inclined to say it was a pretty face, if one noticed it at all.

Mrs. Wainwright decided to follow her a bit to see where she was going. The girl walked on rapidly through the crowd of men and boys, most of them workmen who were all going in the opposite direction to herself. The sidewalk was narrow, and it was difficult at times to get through the crush of people. It was also difficult for Florence to keep in sight of the person she was following. No one took any notice of her or of the girl a few paces in front, who in her turn scarcely glanced at the many faces about her. At a corner where there was a block of traffic, she had to stop a moment on the curbstone. A young fellow of about eighteen, smoking a cigarette, ambled out from a group of men standing in a doorway.

"Hello, Gracie," he said, "I ain't seen you this long time."

"That ain't my fault," the girl answered, hardly looking at the boy, who stared at her with a smirking smile on his face.

"I seen Jim Breen yesterday," the boy went on, shoving his hands into his pockets and looking down at the gutter where a thick mass of slimy mud, filled with cigarette butts and small pieces of

paper, was slowly finding its way into the sewer grating.

But the girl made no answer; she did not even glance at her companion, and was off across the street. The boy smiled, spat out the butt of his cigarette, and joined the group in the doorway, seemingly the entrance to a pool room which, like most places of the sort, had become in prohibition days the headquarters for the old gangs which used to hang over the bars of the saloons.

It had begun to rain; not a real downpour but just a quiet drizzle which made the dense air of the street seem denser and hotter than ever. The girl who had been addressed as Gracie hurried on. She had no umbrella, but evidently did not mind the rain. It was her habit to walk fast, and she was hurrying now,—not because she wanted to get out of the wet or found herself late for an engagement, but merely through force of habit. Her destination was Umber's Café, where the dispensing of imitation beer and stale sandwiches went on daily to a rather shrunken patronage as compared with the time when the lights of this district burned red and late.

Florence, who had walked much farther than she intended, suddenly felt rather tired and faint; so when the girl turned into the door of Umber's, she went in also, taking a seat in the front part of the restaurant with her back to the room. Gracie invariably arrived at Umber's somewhere in the neighborhood of six o'clock. When she entered the café

to-night, it was evident she was an habitu  of the place; and a very young, white-faced head waiter in a bedraggled dress suit and dirty shirt front, said, "Well, here's Gracie" in the tone of voice with which he might have ordered a chicken sandwich. Gracie sat down alone, facing the doorway, at a table in the back part of the room.

This room, on the ground floor of the building, was long and narrow; at the front were various iron grill works, a hanger for hats and coats, and the cashier's desk. The tables at the back were the most popular, being near a battered upright piano upon which nightly from eight to ten a lad of twenty played accompaniments for another youth of his own age, who sang very badly in a kind of falsetto tenor voice. The ceiling of the restaurant was low and was decorated with a green lattice broken in many places, from which drooped branches of dull green and red autumn leaves made of some coarse canvas material. The unnatural color of these leaves and their die-away, drooping manner gave to Umber's a melancholy appearance, although the decorations in question had been put there with the evident idea of transforming a prosaic eating house into a grotto of some sort. The walls were dull brown, and extending half-way down from the top was a border of wall paper depicting faded purple lilacs growing upon a green trellis. The lilacs and autumn leaves, dependent from the trellis, was certainly an extraordinary effect unfortunately lost upon the patrons of Umber's.

After Gracie sat down, one of the waitresses who were under the direction of the young gentleman of the soiled shirt front, came up to the table.

"Ain't it awful weather," she said.

"I don't let the weather bother me," Gracie answered without looking up. "Seen Tommy to-night?" she added.

"No, she's not in yet," the waitress replied, looking about the room vaguely as though she said Tommy might have come in during the interval her back was turned. She continued to stand by Gracie's table, her hands on her hips, looking out toward the door. Neither of the women spoke. But Gracie's gaze, following that of the waitress, spied Florence down by the door.

In the meantime, Florence, who was feeling very tired and rather chilly, had ordered a cup of black coffee. She would have liked a liqueur brandy, knowing that this would revive her immediately; but she never saw any hardship in the denial to herself of such things as medicine while she could be a witness every day to how much simpler the slum proposition was becoming on account of the closing of the saloons.

"Don't you feel well, dearie?" she suddenly heard some one say close at her side. The voice was familiar. She looked up. Gracie Linton was standing by the table, smiling.

"I am a little faint, I think; but shall be all right in a moment," Florence answered. Then added, "Won't you sit down here?"

"Thanks, don't mind if I do," Gracie promptly replied, sitting down opposite Florence.

There was something rather kindly in the girl's expression which appealed to Florence, as it had done that forenoon when she met her on the steps.

"You do look pale," Gracie continued. "Ain't you got any of them smelling salts? I always thought people like you carried smelling salts around with them in a gold mesh bag."

"What do you mean by 'people like me'?" Florence asked, sipping her coffee.

"Oh, well, of course I knew when I seen yer this morning that you didn't belong to this part of town. That's what made me feel awfully queer running into yer on the steps of that old geezer's house."

"I was there doing some work in connection with my settlement house," Florence said, after a moment.

"So you're one of them people that goes about uplifting humanity," Gracie said, laughing. Then added, more seriously, "I hope you ain't a female agent of the U. S. Government on the trail of booze."

"I don't know that I can do much for the uplift of humanity," Florence replied, also laughing; "but I am very interested in all the people who live in this part of the city and the conditions they have to meet."

"Oh, you ain't that serious, really? And you so fine looking and pretty. You had ought to take things more easy. There's a lot of good times to

be had still, in spite of the closing down of most of the night joints. You see, the law can't take all the pep out of life."

Florence paid her bill and started to go; but here was something that interested her tremendously. She often had wished to come face to face on equal terms with a girl of the streets, to see if she could get any insight into the state of mind which causes these girls to lead the life they do, and to find out if certain pet theories of hers in respect to these things were true. There was no sentimentality in Mrs. Wainwright's point of view. The trouble always had been, she thought, that most of the people who had attempted reforms in this particular line of social service work either had been swept off their feet by sentiment or bound to the A. B. C.'s of the police code. Gracie might be a good subject for her. She was the sort of girl she would like to watch for a little. She asked Gracie if she might see her again, and where she lived.

Gracie told Florence her name and address, and then added, "Awfully sorry yer ain't got time to meet Tommy."

"Perhaps some other time I can meet him."

At this Gracie burst into a loud laugh.

"It ain't a him," she exclaimed. "Tommy's my pal. She's late to-night, but is sure to drop in soon."

Mrs. Wainwright said good-by to Gracie and started for home. She felt quite all right again, and much braced in her state of mind; for in the episode at Umber's Restaurant she had found the

human note in her day's work which until this time had seemed lacking in the maze of detail through which she had plodded.

Gracie went back to her table at the end of the room. There were only a few people at Umber's at this early hour of the evening. It was not the sort of restaurant to which one usually goes to eat; at least, it was formerly not that sort of place. But since the public has turned to eating as one of the few permitted pleasures of life—evidenced by the number of bars that have been made into cafeterias and the rushing business they do—many of the old patrons of Umber's still came there to have a bite and look about a bit. A few girls were always to be seen there early in the evening, on the watch for the possible sailor who had emptied a pint from his hip pocket. There were also a certain number of gentlemen of a rather sleek and prosperous appearance who were said to do a good "bootlegging" business in the men's wash room both at Umber's and at other similar places down the street.

In the corner farthest from Gracie were two men eating and talking. One of them, the younger, was evidently drunk. His companion watched him closely, now and then saying something to which the younger man would reply excitedly and then relapse into silence. Down by the door a girl sat drinking some dark stuff from a small glass and looking straight ahead of her, her elbows resting on the edge of the table. Nearer Gracie, against the wall by which she was sitting, was a fat, red-faced

man reading a newspaper and every few moments looking up over it at her. By turning her gaze directly upon the door, Gracie could see every time the fat man looked at her without once seeming to see him.

After a time the waitress said, "What'll yer have?"

"Same old thing, I guess," Gracie answered; and took out a little black purse she had in her pocket, looked in it, and put it down with her handkerchief on the table.

The same old thing was a bottle of Sarsaparilla with which after a very long time the waitress returned, coming slowly across the room, her feet moving as though she were in a trance. The bottle was opened in the same dreamlike manner and placed on the table.

A little later a number of stragglers drifted in,—men looking very wet with their collars turned up. Also, some girls in groups, one or two of whom nodded to Gracie; one dark-haired girl came over and asked her how she was and if Tommy had shown up. A rather bedraggled sailor came in with a boy of eighteen or thereabouts and sat near Gracie, who looked across and smiled as the sailor turned toward her.

Finally Tommy appeared, hurrying into the restaurant with a wet umbrella which the white-faced head waiter took from her and deposited behind the cashier's desk. Tommy stopped and bought a box of cigarettes and then smiling upon every one

as she passed, went over and sat down at Gracie's table.

"I thought you weren't never coming," Gracie said.

"Did you ever know me to fluke, girlie?" Tommy answered, laughing.

There was something about her manner which seemed to put new life into every one. The waitress of the trancelike state came almost immediately and asked Tommy what she would have; and the head waiter approached with the menu, a large affair with a blue-flowered border very much spotted and stained, and the appearance of having been eaten upon more often than consulted.

Tommy took the card, and scarcely looking at it, ordered a tongue sandwich with plenty of mustard on it and a cup of coffee.

"What'll yer have, Gracie?" she inquired of her companion.

"Give me a chicken sandwich and a piece of apple pie."

"Anything to drink?" the waitress asked.

"Why don't yer ask me if I'll have a diamond brooch? No; I don't want any of your half-per-cent belly wash."

The sailor, pausing in his consumption of steak and bread and butter, looked over again to Gracie and smiled.

The restaurant was half filled now, and the autumn leaves and lilacs were losing some of their dinginess in clouds of smoke. Suddenly the piano

started and a high, flat-sounding voice sang, "Give me a kiss, dearie, before we say good-by."

Tommy smilingly nodded to the youth at the piano who winked at her.

"Flirting with the ivories?" Gracie asked, still looking at the sailor.

"He's some kid, that boy," said Tommy.

"He ain't bad on the piano, if that's what you mean," Gracie replied. "But I don't see what he's got for looks." After a moment she went on, "say, you should have seen my swell friend in here just now,—the lady I told you about this morning."

"She must have been broke to be hanging out in this joint."

"Oh, you don't get me," Gracie explained; "She's one of them social welfare workers."

"Well, nix on her then," Tommy said.

"That's what I thought. But she is certainly a peach."

"Did you get that waist at Vonik's?" Tommy asked.

"No I didn't. They ain't marked down, after all."

"Kate Dearly said they was going to have a sale of them."

"Well Kate better tell that to the marines."

And so the talk went on. The sailor had finished his steak and was looking at Gracie. When that young lady got up to go to the retiring room, she said a few words to him in passing. When she came back to her table, he and his friend came over

and sat down with her and Tommy. There was much shrill laughter, and drinks of a very pale color and extremely acid taste were ordered all around. The sailor placed a fresh box of cigarettes on the table and moved nearer to Gracie. The boy at the piano played louder and louder, and the youth beside him sang of more kisses and good-bys and the little lane in summer where the cherry blossoms grow; while waitresses moved hither and thither with tall funnel-shaped glasses of camouflaged beer, and the head waiter continued to stand in the doorway, clutching a greasy menu card. It was the height of the evening gayety at Umber's café, where a few men and women of the old red-light district were trying their best to make merry over tumblers of varied Volstead brew. Outside, in the rain which came down unceasingly, wet and dingy-looking people passed along the street.

CHAPTER III

That evening Florence was sitting at the desk in her brother's study making certain notes on pieces of paper which she had before her. The name "Gracie Linton" appeared a number of times; and underneath it headings such as, "Two girls,—Regular work for them.—Permanent home somewhere, possibly in country." Farther down the page were the addresses of a number of houses which she had visited that day and suggestions which she had to make on each of them. Then appeared the words, "Gracie and Tommy," underlined: also, "country life—Danger of boredom.—Good woman to supervise." Many of the notes Florence had scratched out and re-written. She was still scribbling away on her papers when Max came in.

"How does Delane strike you, my dear?" he asked.

Kendall had been so hurried at breakfast that he had had no chance until now to ask his sister what had been her impressions of the evening before.

"I should say he is strictly honest," Florence answered.

"I am sure of it," Max said, as he lighted his pipe. "But I know what you really think,—that he won't do here."

"I haven't said it," Florence remarked, smiling.

"But you thought it."

"Oh, yes,—I thought it. I could not help thinking it. But whoever said it was necessary that he should fit in here?" she went on.

"No one, unless Delane himself. He has thrown out a number of remarks, apparently in a chaffing way, that my house must contain a mystery because I so seldom let any of my pals see the inside of it. Of course it was vulgar of him, but he didn't know how it sounded."

"His sister is probably behind his social ambitions," Florence said.

"Undoubtedly," Max replied. "However, I want to do all I can for him just now, as our venture looks very promising."

"How splendid," Florence exclaimed, reaching over and giving her brother's hand a good squeeze. "I am so glad for you, Max dear."

Max looked at Florence a moment and then said, "He has asked us out to his house for supper Sunday night."

"I hope you made excuses."

"Yes; I told him you had an engagement for Sunday, and that I would probably be out of town playing golf."

There was a pause. The brother and sister sat looking into the fire quite as two people do who are on such intimate terms that long silences are as eloquent as words.

Then Florence spoke. "All the men of Delane's type seem to me to be so lacking in imagination."

"What do you mean?" her brother asked.

"Their vision so seldom goes beyond the concrete fact of the project they have in hand. There are such vast other possibilities in every big undertaking besides the definite result or end of the thing itself. Just in the matter of my own work, there are so many bigger things than the actual purposes we have in view. This afternoon I ran into a girl of the streets in a South End restaurant—"

"I wish you wouldn't go into such places," Max interrupted.

Florence continued, not heeding this remark. "She interested me tremendously. As an individuality, as a living personality, she appealed to me as the one real thing I had struck in my whole day's work. What can be done with a girl like that? What is the long chain of circumstances that has brought her to where she is? Now, for instance, in the case of Delane. He has power; he controls with you large tracts of valuable land. You both want to develop it to the best advantage; but just what does that advantage mean to Delane,—or to you, for that matter?"

"My dear—" Max put in again.

"No, I do not mean to place you in the same class with Delane," Florence said quickly. "But it seems to me in all these things the great chance is missed; the chance of dealing with the individual and doing something for him is overlooked."

"It won't be missed if the franchise is granted and the railway put through. The land will develop like magic, if it is made accessible to the public,"

Max said in a very firm tone of voice, showing a little annoyance at what he considered a woman's usual lack of perspective in such matters.

"You have said it," Florence ejaculated; "that is just what I mean. You look at the matter as Delane does,—from the money-making point of view. Your horizon is a Greenvale of jerry-built tenements painted yellow, with three porches in front of a supposedly colonial style to suggest the home, and three porches in back of flimsier design decorated with lines of washing,—white, waving banners of large families. The more houses and the nearer together they are, the more reason you will have to pride yourself upon your success. Greenvale will look like every other back yard of a great city, and people will flock there, deluded by the fact of cheap rents and fresh air."

"Of course," Max said; "but isn't that all right? Isn't that the kind of thing which is solving your slum proposition,—getting the people to live in the outskirts of the cities? Isn't it a fine thing to give them light and air and clean homes in uncongested districts?"

"Certainly," Florence replied. "I do not criticize you. I only deplore the lack of scope in your views."

"I am afraid I don't exactly follow you," her brother said a little hopelessly.

"I mean what a chance there is for you and Delane to do something fine and big, if you will only see beyond your railways and houses and rents.

Perhaps you have studied the garden city problem as it has been developed in England. Why not do something of that sort here? What an opportunity; what a pity if you throw it away. Give up a little of your land to garden plots; let your streets run crooked, with pretty squares and turns and open spaces, and let your houses be built on different plans. You would not lose much money by it. I doubt if you would lose any; for you could make Greenvale so much finer and better than any other place of the sort within twenty miles of Boston that it would become famous. There are always open spots in such districts,—usually stagnant pools where mosquitoes breed. Make them gardens and let your tenants have a suitable place to cool themselves of a summer evening other than on the crowded porches of your yellow-and-white fire traps. That is what I mean when I say that I wish you would see beyond the mere achievement of building houses and renting them.”

“It all sounds pretty fine, Florence,” Max said kindly; “but Delane and I are not imbued as you are with the uplift idea.”

“No one mentioned uplift. I am tired to death of the word,” Florence exclaimed rather heatedly. “But why shouldn’t every man who puts up houses for people to live in be in some small way a benefactor to humanity? The landlords that build tenements on a large scale are always rich men. Delane, for example, has loads of money. Why should he not feel it worth while to do something more with

his property than merely build houses on it as cheaply as possible, to rent for as much as people can be made to pay? Why this constant desire to get more than one gives? It is the curse of all modern business; it is the lack of perspective,—of imagination.”

Florence arose and turned to her brother. It was the first time she had talked to him about Greenvale in this way and she wondered how he would take it.

“Delane would laugh at you,” he said, “if he heard you to-night. He would say you are a visionary.”

“And you are thinking it,” Florence replied. “But why should you, for you are the sort of man that could do these things. You have the intelligence and outlook to appreciate fine things; you have the standards by which to measure mediocrity. Don’t, Max, don’t let this undertaking of yours become mediocre; make of it something fine.”

“If I had the money,” Max said, “something might be done along the lines you suggest.”

“Persuade Delane to do it. Make him see what a great opportunity lies before him.”

“You try it yourself,” Max said, as he started to go. “And see how far you get.”

“I’ll wager you I can do something.”

“Possibly,” Max called out; “Delane, I believe, is rather susceptible where the ladies are concerned.”

“Don’t be silly, please,” Florence replied. “By the way, I forgot to tell you that I have heard from

Susan Anderton. You remember her, don't you? She is in New York and is coming to Boston soon, expecting to spend the winter here. She writes that New York is more filled with profiteers than Paris, and that she finds it harder to abide the American brand of them than the foreign."

"Of course Susan would make comparisons," Max remarked.

"It is perfectly natural," Florence said. "It must be fifteen years since she was last in this country."

"Have you her letter?" Max asked.

"Yes,—upstairs. I will get it."

Florence went to fetch the letter, leaving Max gazing into the fire. He had every reason to think seriously of the question of Susan Anderton's appearance in his household and as a possible neighbor for the winter. He did not know her well, but he thought he knew her sufficiently to dislike her rather. He had first met her in Paris when he was visiting his sister and brother-in-law some years before. Miss Anderton had been much at the Wainwrights'; was devoted to Florence and transferred a considerable part of that devotion to Florence's good-looking brother when he made his appearance in France. She was a woman of the most charming traits of mind and presented to the rather concrete Max certain vistas of life which he had not explored. She was the complex sort of person that Europe produces from American material. Miss Anderton had lived abroad ever since she could remember,

and her last visit to this country had been made some ten or fifteen years ago. At first Max had been fascinated by her brilliancy,—a certain cold brilliancy of intellect which is always appealing to a man; but her complexities, behind a veil of the most charming simplicity, had annoyed him after a time, and he left the little circle in Paris without deep regrets.

Florence had known her first when she was in Switzerland with her mother. They met there every year and often spent the spring together on the Riviera, where Miss Anderton had a house. Her friends were always changing, her background seemed never the same; and Florence was perhaps the only person that had known her consistently through many years. When Florence came to Paris to live after her marriage, Susan Anderton appeared on the scene. She figured constantly in the Wainwrights' entertainments. During the war she loaned her villa to the government for the use of convalescent soldiers; and when Jack Wainwright was killed, she had proved a valuable friend to Florence in the circumstances of her grief and subsequent departure to America.

She was some years older than Florence,—probably in the neighborhood of forty; but her age, like the incidents that made up her life, was indefinite. During a motor trip through the south of France, Max had got to know her very well, and after he returned home the two corresponded in a more or less desultory fashion; but Max was not given to letter

writing, and Miss Anderton never made an effort to continue connections which were not exigent to the moment. Florence's mention of her just now brought her to Max's mind for the first time in several years. Her appearance on the horizon of his Boston life was a trifle disconcerting.

"Would you like me to read it?" Florence asked, as she came back with the letter.

"Yes, if you care to. It is odd of her to come over here, isn't it?"

"One never knows what Susan will do," Florence answered. "This part about our friends in Paris will not interest you," she went on, as she opened the letter. "Then she writes about her uncle. 'Through the death of an uncle whom I hated,' Susan says, 'I have come into a slight addition to my income. That is why I am in New York. There is to be some litigation over the will, and I find I must remain in this country most of the winter. I hoped to get a flat in New York where I could live and be near my lawyer; but finding flats not only an expensive but unobtainable luxury, I am considering the matter of Boston. Shall run over soon and hope you are to be in town. It must be delightful for you to be with your brother. I remember him in the pleasantest sort of way,'"

Florence stopped. Max was frowning.

"Is that all she says?" he asked.

Florence went on with the letter.

"I received your letter before I left France. It was so good to hear from you again. But what

is this work you speak of? Surely you should be taking a rest after your labors in the war. It is a painful process trying to look after other people as you seem to be doing. I think the managing of oneself requires all one's efforts, especially in these complicated times. You have no idea how dreadful New York is. It is a maddening existence here and I fear I shall never like the place, being built too much on the old plan to care for heathenism run riot and democracy turned loose to dance a jig on a tower of golden dollars. Boston will suit me better. Perhaps you still have people there who speak the English language as I remember it. And do look about for a little apartment where I can settle down this winter. Yours, etc. Susan.' "

"It is only because you are here that she is coming to Boston," Max said.

"Very likely," his sister replied, as she folded up the letter. "However, I shall be very glad to see her again. I never shall forget how wonderful she was when I came back to Paris after Jack's death."

"She loved the important part which she played in your life at that time," Max answered.

"She changed her plans completely on account of me," Florence said a little sadly.

"But always with her own little game to play."

"I believe you never fancied her."

"She amused me very much at first; but I think on the whole I like less variegated people."

Florence decided to write to Susan at once and ask that lady to stay with her when she should arrive

in Boston. Max made no comment upon this, beyond suggesting that it might be well to qualify the invitation by stating some definite time that they would be glad to have Miss Anderton with them.

"Of course she will understand that it is only until she finds an apartment," Florence said.

"Which is quite likely to mean all winter," Max remarked.

When Florence was out the next morning, she found herself about one o'clock near a downtown hotel which always has been famous for its cuisine. She went into the lobby to telephone Max to see if he cared to come out for lunch with her, and she ran into Jim Delane, emerging from one of the telephone booths.

Delane's pleasure at seeing her was too evident to be lost upon Florence, who found his hearty greeting and handshake a trifle embarrassing in the midst of the groups of men standing about.

"Well, now, if this isn't a piece of luck," he said. "Nora is here, waiting for me. You must join us and have lunch."

"But I was just going to call up my brother," Florence put in, "to see if he would come out and eat with me."

"Never mind about that now," Delane went on hurriedly. "Max always eats earlier than this. He has probably had his lunch. You come right along with us.—There's Nora," he said, darting off through the crowd to fetch Miss Delane, who made rather a bright spot in the dull-toned hallway with

her gown of mulberry color and silver fox furs.

There seemed nothing for Florence to do but fall in with Delane and his sister, however little the idea interested her or however slight might be her pleasure in meeting Miss Nora. She might as well face the music now as later, knowing how inevitable it was that some day the acquaintance with Delane's sister would have to be made. "She may not be so objectionable," Florence thought, "as I have imagined her." The introduction, however, did little to dispel her doubts on that score; Miss Delane's clothes fairly reeked with money, while her face, voice and manner did not quite match the quality of her toilette, a thing which so often happens nowadays.

"It is mighty fine, running into you this way," she said as they entered the dining room. "Jim has talked an awful lot about you ever since the other night he was at your house. I have been trying to arrange a date to have you out to our place."

"That is very kind of you," Florence replied, taking her seat opposite Nora, while Delane sat at the side between the two women.

He seemed to devote all his attention to Mrs. Wainwright, quite regardless of his sister, who kept up a constant chatter. Various things were ordered, all of them much heartier and more elaborate than Florence was in the habit of taking at luncheon. But her host was bent upon eating a good deal and insisted that she do likewise.

"That is one thing I've never had—a delicate

appetite," Nora exclaimed, when Florence absolutely refused to allow Delane to order a rich dessert. "I always say, what's your stomach for, if you can't eat everything you want?"

"But sometimes one does not care for a lot of things," Florence said quietly.

"I suppose you got very little to eat in France," Miss Delane continued rather loudly, in her high-pitched voice.

A voice,—what secrets it discloses; what abysses it opens up. How wonderfully in a moment it strips bare the outward camouflage of clothes and paint and powder. On the other hand, how quickly it can adorn the threadbare coat or soiled linen with qualities of the true shining kind which represent intelligence and cultivation. Miss Nora's voice disclosed deep gulfs over which it would be difficult for Florence to find a way; and the last remark left her gasping for a reply.

"I told my sister about your work in the war," Delane said, to fill the gap. "Nora did a lot of Red Cross work herself."

That seemed to close the subject; and then Delane tried to pay Mrs. Wainwright a pretty compliment by speaking of how much he had enjoyed himself at her house.

"I don't know when I have passed such a pleasant evening," he affirmed.

Florence did not mind his compliments so much as the way in which he looked at her; he was over-officious in his attentions and almost patronizing in

his frequent queries as to whether this or that dish were just as she liked it.

"I am such an easy person to entertain," she finally said, by way of remonstrance. "I would have been perfectly happy with a plate of soup and some bread and butter."

This seemed to amuse Delane, and he looked at his sister as much as to say, "See how the poor dear had to economize until my money gave Kendall a lift."

Over the coffee at the end of luncheon, there was a moment while Nora was chattering about the shopping she had done that morning and the hat she had bought at Hollander's for the absurdly low sum of seventy-five dollars, when Florence was conscious of Delane's very intent gaze fixed upon her. She looked straight across at the voluble lady opposite, but could feel Delane's eyes upon her, scrutinizing every line and contour of her face. It was decidedly unpleasant to Mrs. Wainwright; and at last she looked at him quickly and sharply and said that she must go, having a very full afternoon ahead. Miss Nora's offer to take her in her car wherever she wished was politely declined.

When Florence reached the street she felt that she could not have sat another moment and listened to the aimless chatter and been the object of Delane's contemplation. She would have liked to speak about Greenvale and perhaps approach the subject from the angle she had taken with Max the night before; to see what attitude toward it Delane would take;

but nothing serious would have been possible with the raucous Nora on the scene. Delane had seemed really unobjectionable when she had met him at home. To-day, with the setting his sister lent to his personality, he appeared more ordinary than Florence had supposed he was. "I must always be nice to him," she was thinking: "I must make every effort to go on being nice, and I must never let Max know how I feel."

She had so many things to do during the afternoon that Delane slipped out of her mind; but when she started back to Marlborough Street late in the day and found herself in the crowd of homeward-bound pedestrians, there was something about the busy, prosperous-looking men who hurried past her that recalled him. Florence wondered just how much she was likely to see of him and what his connection with Max might mean in her own personal life. It was that hour of the winter afternoon when one seems to fall naturally into meditation, although caught up in the swirl of people all about;—when the sky above the city turns a dazzling blue and grows more intense in color by contrast with the yellow of the street lamps. These glitter and sparkle in a competition of illumination with the stars above, which appear distinctly in the sky somewhat later than their minor brothers of the earth. The tone of the sky deepens until it becomes almost purple on the horizon, where an occasional electric sign, high on the roof of a building, flashes and vibrates like a handful of jewels dropped from above on the roofs

of the city. Over the middle of the town a gray shadow hangs where the trees of the Common and Public Gardens gather the darkness of the approaching night, while toward the five spires of the Back Bay district, tiny figures in black silhouette move along the broad paths beneath the trees. The air is cold and crisp, and every one walks rapidly. Far on the edge of the open spaces of the Common is a never-ending procession of automobile lamps, moving rather slowly on account of the dense mass of traffic. These lights have the appearance of a long chain propelled by one master hand, so rhythmic and unceasing is their motion.

The return home of the workers in a city has in it quite as much of poetry as the old pastoral scenes of shepherds crossing the fields in a dim twilight. This evening Florence was more than ever aware of the fact that now she was one of these workers; that her brother was one of them, and that they lived in a world of Delanes and hurrying forces. This meant new connections for them, new situations which never had to be met in the old, placid days of their earlier life.

She reached home just in time for dinner. As the maid opened the door, a rather stout lady came hurrying down the stairs. There was an exclamation, an embrace and vigorous kisses. It was Susan Anderton; she had arrived.

CHAPTER IV

The always exuberant Miss Anderton drew Florence into the living room with various exclamations of, "It's wonderful to see you again, my dear," and, "Aren't you surprised to have me descend upon you in this way?"

"I just couldn't stand New York another day," she continued, sitting down on the sofa with her arm around her friend. "I knew you would not mind if I came straight here. I wired you, but of course you didn't get my telegram."

"No," Florence said, "I have been out all day."

"Skirmishing about, I suppose, for the lost, strayed or stolen," Susan remarked.

"I know you will not take me seriously in what I am doing," Florence put in.

"Of course I will. I think it is perfectly splendid. Tell me all about it."

There was so much to be talked about, so many bits of Paris gossip for Susan to produce, that it was some time before the subject of Florence's work was touched upon. In Miss Anderton's comments upon it, Florence had a feeling that now in the atmosphere of Susan's companionship there would be a strange mixture of cross-currents which could have only the effect of making her present

mode of life appear somewhat inconsistent. Seeing Susan again had brought back the memory of the years in Paris—the life with her husband and his death in the tragedy of the war—in a more vivid manner than she had experienced since her residence in Boston. She could not help but wonder just how distracting it was going to be to have this friend with her, who would always carry her mind back to the past, to her life before it had stopped; for everything since Jack's death had been only an attempt to make existence possible.

Florence was not quite sure what effect Miss Anderton's arrival would have upon her brother. His frown the night before had caused her to doubt his pleasure upon hearing of that lady's advent. That she had descended upon them so unexpectedly might cause more than a frown. However, all he said was that it was like Susan to allow her letter to precede her by only a day.

"Do your best to get her an apartment," he added.

"Of course," Florence replied sweetly. "But be as nice as you can to her while she is with us."

Miss Anderton had gone upstairs to get ready for dinner, and Florence had taken this opportunity to prepare her brother for her appearance.

At dinner Max was seized with that feeling of uncertainty in connection with this friend of his sister which he had experienced years before, in his association with her in Paris. She was apparently a frank, simple type, yet was always producing in him the idea that she meant much more than she said

and that from her actions one might infer much more than appeared on the surface. Her complexities of mind, combined with her unstudied manner, troubled him again to-night as he sat opposite her at dinner. He always had felt vaguely, although finding no definite facts to base his belief on, that her influence upon Florence was not good. Yet Susan was irreproachable in character in spite of a somewhat unpleasant effect which her personality had upon people who knew her but slightly. She was undoubtedly good-looking in a broad, expansive sort of way. When she smiled, you would have been inclined to unburden your soul to her, provided there were things upon your soul that only the elect could hear. When her face was sober in repose, a certain cynicism appeared around the eyes and mouth which would have made you wonder just what use she might make of your confidence, and just how far her criticism would be sincere. How her influence upon Florence was not good, Max would have been at a loss to say. Perhaps it was merely a question of the dominating quality of Susan, absorbing into her own the lesser personalities with which she came in contact. There are certain people whose friends always seem somewhat less strong in character than themselves,—wholly charming souls but who seem not to have the same steadfastness of purpose. Susan was one of them. She seemed always to bask in the bright light of health and vigor; her friends shone in the light she reflected, not in their own.

When Max found she was in his house to-night, he made up his mind to like her as much as possible; to permit her to make the same impression on him that she had done during those early days in Paris when she had frequented the Wainwright ménage and had been able to amuse him and create for him a certain foreign atmosphere which was lacking in his sister's familiar mode of life. Yet now the feeling returned of not being sure just how to approach Susan.

The conversation wandered on to Greenvale and Kendall's business prospects.

"Your new suburb will be ideal," Susan said. "How splendid to be able in this country to get away from the clash of the trolleys. I think I should like to live there. You must build a dear little house for me, Max, and I will have a garden and raise tulips. I will make Greenvale famous for its tulips."

Florence looked at her brother with an amused expression.

"My dear lady," Max said firmly. "That is the only thing which is holding us up now,—trying to get the electric car line put through to our property."

"What a mistake you make," Miss Anderton replied. "It will ruin the place."

"Not for the dividends," Florence put in. "Besides, it is to be most unfashionable. I can't fancy Susan living in a place that was not smart."

"I hear one may do anything in America and

preserve one's character," Susan remarked. "I intend to be quite reckless over here."

She looked at Max and smiled. He turned his attention to his dinner.

"You will find," Florence said, "that you can't be so individual here as in Europe. That is, without attracting a lot of notice."

"In other words, Americans are awful busy-bodies," Susan replied, with a slight raising of her eyebrows. "They always were. Altruistic principles have seized the nation, and you are all bent on reform, which soon becomes an annoying inquisitiveness to know every one else's affairs."

Florence smiled indulgently, while Max remained lost in thought.

"I should say," Susan continued, "that at present this country is mad on the subject of uplift. Even you, Florence, have been tainted with the yellow journalism of salvation. The old-time Puritan preachers had the decency to stay in their pulpits; nowadays every one must run about and pry into other people's affairs. Instead of living a life of leisure in a charming house with a charming brother"—at this Max frowned a little—"you must spend your days in some dingy slum, deluded by the thought that the much pampered working class is aware of your presence and affected by it."

There was a silence. Perhaps she had said too much. Miss Anderton rarely made mistakes of this tactless sort, but just now she had spoken rather too emphatically on a subject which was bound to be

very near Florence's heart. There had been throughout dinner something in the attitude of Max that was decidedly annoying. Accustomed for years to being the central figure of brilliant dinner tables, listened to, laughed at and applauded, Susan felt in the quiet chill of this dimly lighted Boston room an atmosphere of almost definite hostility. Her imagination was enlarging a little upon the void which she felt in the New England perspective.

"I don't mean to be unkind," she said, after a moment. "I only wish to help you, to advise you, dear; to be a kind of elder sister taking a lively interest in what you are doing. You look so frail—so different from the way I remember you; and to-night you seem so tired that I would only try to make you realize you cannot attempt too much in this work which interests you; that your friends have some claim upon you. If I should say that you are meant for something better, you would say I did not know,—that what you are doing is the best sort of thing. But there must be others who, more fitted for the work, are better able to cope with the difficulties and stand up under the strain of it. Don't you think I am right, Max?"

"Yes; you probably are right," he answered, showing much less interest than Miss Anderton had supposed he would take in the matter. "But Florence is right, too. As life is lived now in America, I think it is no longer possible for a person of an active turn of mind not to go in for something or other. It may be baby hygiene and pure milk; an-

imal rescue or anti-vivisection, but every one has a particular bee in his bonnet. That may be why the people who desire a picturesque life of leisure emigrate to Europe. The workers come in and the molluscs go out."

"In other words," Susan exclaimed, "the dregs of Europe will take the place of your finer spirits. But I will not be called a mollusc. That was a nasty thrust," she added, laughing. "I am sure I never had vacant moments in my daily program when I lived abroad."

"Never, Susan," Florence replied. "You were always the most delightful hostess and a thoroughly energetic soul."

"But I am sure to-night your brother considers me quite useless on this side of the ocean," Susan said, as they got up from the table.

Later that evening, after Max had retired to his books and pipe, and the two women sat talking together of old times and mutual friends,—all those emancipated creatures who were drifting back to Europe to try to find some echo of the froth of life as it was lived before the war,—Miss Anderton chanced to remark that all that—meaning Florence's life in Paris—was entirely unlike her present existence. Florence replied that of course she knew Susan would not approve of her now, but notwithstanding this, she considered all she was doing far more worth while and interesting than the old years of happy idleness.

"It depends a good deal on whether you want to

lead your own life as you choose or make the other fellow's way easier; to be happy yourself or make some one else happy," Susan interrupted. "I have always been rather pagan in that respect."

"But you see," Florence went on, "I have not taken up this work with any such ideas. I did not enter upon it with wholly altruistic purposes; nor become imbued with Socialism and mad on the subject of votes for women. I had to absorb myself completely in something, and this was the nearest to my grasp and the most interesting."

If there were one thing especially typical of Florence, it was that she was always truthful with herself. This declaration to Miss Anderton was characteristic of her wish never to fly under false colors. Her mother used to tell a story of her as a child, when she had been found one day high up in an apple tree, trying to make her descent with a kitten which she had rescued from a barking puppy. A neighbor, probably a member of the humane society, if such a thing existed in those days, thought it showed a fine spirit toward animals; but the youthful Florence rather took the wind out of her sentiment when she announced that she had made the ascent into the tree merely to satisfy herself. That she had always wanted to climb that particular apple tree and nurse would never let her; but when she saw the kitten pursued by the dog, she thought that now was her chance. She had an excuse for the climb, and any rebuke that might be forthcoming would be overlooked,—as, in fact, it had been, only

praise being given the little girl for her kindness to animals.

Florence was beginning to realize, as she had suspected when she first heard that Susan was in America, that her friend was going to be a disturbing influence to her concentration in her work. She would not let this influence shake her or lead to any slackening of effort on her part; she was far too sincere in everything she did for that to happen. But still it was there; the quiet, critical attitude of the friend who was closer to her than any one in the world. Closer even than Max, for his state of mind had never gone beyond those simple impressions of youth when one of his temperamental views life simply and accepts things easily. Besides, Florence had been separated from her brother during the most vivid years of her existence, and the companionship of the past year had not served to bridge the gulf which would always lie between their natures.

The next day Florence thought a good deal of what Susan had said; yet not so much of what was said as what her attitude implied. It was evident that Miss Anderton would never be able to enter upon that perfect plane of understanding which had been their common ground in the old days. It might be that the light, inconsequent mood that belonged essentially to those times was gone from her forever; but she wondered if she had really outgrown her friend. Susan now seemed a little removed in her sympathy, and Florence rather dreaded another intimate conversation; so it was with a certain relief

that she saw Delane appear on the second evening of Miss Anderton's stay in the Kendall home. Another discussion of Florence's affairs would not be possible.

As Max brought Delane into the room where his sister and her friend were sitting, Florence was glad of this chance for Susan to meet him. What would be her impression? Surely he was a new type to her; a personality striking in a different way from the many striking and strident individuals with whom Miss Anderton had come in contact during her various peregrinations over the continent of Europe. He was the product of certain forces and tendencies which had scarcely started when the admirable Susan brushed the dust of America from her feet many years ago.

Any doubts about the impression Delane might make or fail to make were quickly settled by the cordiality of Susan toward him, and the greater ease which Delane displayed to-night than on the occasion of his former visit. He chatted quite merrily with Susan while Florence and Max sat listening.

"I really had no idea, Mr. Delane, that people could do such things," Susan was saying. "You are a wonder."

"You mean with the land?" Delane asked.

"No; more especially the way you have transformed Max Kendall into a vital, up-to-the-moment person from the somewhat casual but wholly delightful creature I knew in Paris."

"I don't think I have done anything in the trans-

formation line. You see, the land belonged to Max. It's the land that has done the trick."

"Land or no land," Susan exclaimed, "he is quite different, and it takes more than a piece of real estate to work such changes. Yes, really it is superb," she went on. "It seems as though that is the very thing which is being done now in America. Unexpected vistas of people are constantly opening; one's mental attitude is always changing, and like wizards, you newer people"—Florence wondered how Delane would take that; probably all right, she thought, as very likely he did not consider himself one of the newer people—"are magically changing the most conservative types and institutions into living, alert realities. There seems to be an overabundance of vitality here which is striking fire from rocks and bringing the lightning down from above."

"It is immense to hear you talk that way," Delane said enthusiastically.

"Not nearly so immense as to sit by and see what you are doing," Susan came back quite majestically.

Surely she is a wonder, thought Florence; three weeks in the United States and talking as though she knew the key to the whole situation of things in this country. Even if she did not always hit the mark, the zest of her spirit made up for any lack of correct perspective. Of course Delane would be captivated. Susan's abundance of animal spirits would strike just the right note in him.

"Some day I want you to take me—you and

Max," she was saying, "out to your property. I would like to see a place of that sort grow. There must be something thrilling in watching roses come where there were only weeds."

"What she means," Max said, laughing, "is to see the tomato cans removed and model tenements spring from dump heaps."

"I will have it my way, though," Susan continued. "I will see your Greenvale—is that the name?—live up to its expectations. You really can't call a place by such a name unless you cause the wilderness to blossom. Your houses are not complete if they have no gardens. You know what I said last night, Max, about the little house you must build for me where I shall raise tulips."

Delane looked at Max in a rather disconcerted manner. Had Kendall gone out of his mind, promising houses for very smart ladies with gardens in which they could grow flowers?

Seeing his expression, Max smiled.

"It is all right, Jim, old man," he said. "You must not believe all this very excellent woman tells you, or be carried off your feet by the color of her tulips."

This was more like the attitude he had first taken toward Susan, and it pleased her. It was like a breath of the early days in Paris when he had joked and bantered with her about some of her ideas. She showed her pleasure in her eyes as she looked across at him now. Florence also was beaming; for these were her ideas,—to develop the new sub-

urban tract into something more attractive than mere rows of houses. Perhaps here would lie the common ground on which she could walk again in complete sympathy with her friend.

"I think what Susan suggests is splendid," was all she said. "Even if the soil of Greenvale prove to be unfitted to the cultivation of tulips, surely poppies will grow in the most unpromising conditions."

"Yes," Max remarked, turning to Delane, "my sister was talking to me a short time ago about the possibilities in the Greenvale property which she thinks you and I are missing. She had in mind a sort of garden city."

He had not spoken of this before to Delane, who was taken somewhat by surprise and showed it.

"You probably know what has been done in England along that line," Miss Anderton said to him. "Such perfectly lovely little settlements have sprung up outside some of the great cities. There are flowers, gardens, and curving vistas down what seem for all the world the streets of a mediæval town."

Susan was sure Delane knew nothing of all this,—that it was untouched ground to him; but her tone was such that it implied he knew exactly what she was talking about. In this man she had seen at once there were great depths of ignorance, and seeing this, she also realized that the surest approach to him would be to take for granted that he knew about many things of which even the names perhaps

were unfamiliar; and that he must be told, yet told so delicately that he would not perceive he was receiving instruction along the untrodden paths of his mind. She did not give him a chance to say that he never had heard of the so-called garden cities; but went on quickly to a more detailed account of some visits she had paid them, what she had seen and—thrown in quite casually—what she had thought about it all,—this really being the most important part.

Delane was very attentive, although it was evident that he did not at the moment in any way apply to the present or future exigencies of the Greenvale Holding Company the somewhat copious information Miss Anderton was scattering about her. He was eager to learn all he could where he could. He had the desire of a recently awakened mind to drink in every bit of knowledge about all sorts of things which should come his way. While he did not see the application of gardens and mediæval streets to the prosaic lines of straight roads which stared him in the face every day from the blue prints of the surveyors' plans on the walls of his office, yet he felt the prick of new things, apparently old and taken for granted by the initiated, but which he never had come upon even in the most transitory way.

He went home, quite dazzled by the personality of Miss Anderton, this creature so strange and new to his former habits of mind. There was a definiteness of approach in her manner which struck him

as different from all the other women he had known. To be sure, he had not known many except of the *passant le temps* variety; and perhaps not the best of that kind. His sister was a fair type of what until now he had considered the feminine mind. While he could not express it to himself, there was something of the masculine about Miss Anderton which had made it easy for him to understand her. He felt as though he had always known her.

But Florence was by no means forced out of the picture by the larger personality of Miss Anderton. Delane was more and more impressed by her charm, her grace, and what he pleased to call her exceeding kindness to himself. Of course Florence, so naturally kind and gracious to every one, could not know that Delane was interpreting her manner toward him as something very special or particular; but there she was, a figure radiant and beautiful to him, causing him more thought and interesting him more than any one he had met in a long time. To-night he thought she never had looked so well; her dark blue gown with the lace at the throat and cuffs made her rather pale face seem to shine out under the rich mass of deep auburn hair. He observed every motion she made, and every time she spoke he watched the play of expression about her eyes and mouth. He had known girls with mouths just as pretty; he certainly had seen girls with hair of a more beautiful color, but no one had been quite like Mrs. Wainwright. Everything about her was fine. He wondered if it were merely this fineness that

made him think so much about her, or something far different and deeper.

Florence, too, was immensely pleased by the outcome of the evening. Delane had appeared to better advantage; and the note of cordiality which had been struck between himself and Miss Anderton was distinctly interesting. Max, on the other hand, was not so comfortable in his mind. It was the quality in Susan of taking people by storm which he never had liked. She had done it with him in Paris, although he was sufficiently sophisticated to know that he was being taken by storm. Besides, he never was really swept off his feet by any one. Perhaps that was why he had never married. Probably Susan Anderton had interested him at one time as much as it would ever be possible for any one to do; yet he always had seen through her. He flattered himself that he had seen through her even when he had been most enchanted by her personality. Then he had come to dislike her, to be suspicious of her. So now, it was something of a shock and not wholly to his fancy to see her appear on his horizon and work her old tricks,—and on his partner in business, which made the matter worse. Naturally Delane was easy prey. He was a child in the nuances of life. He would take Susan wholeheartedly, which apparently was just the way she had taken him.

Upstairs Susan was saying to Florence, as she bade her good-night, that Mr. Delane was a fresh type, very good-looking, and that much might be

made of him. Florence replied that she was not much interested in the making; she would leave that to Max. But of course Susan meant something quite different. She always had found it amusing to absorb people,—to “get them” for all they were worth. Here was a new experiment for her.

CHAPTER V

Through the next few weeks Max noticed in Delane a certain moodiness, something like absent-mindedness, if such a thing had been possible in a man of Delane's type. It was not that he in any way slackened in his efforts concerning the property, but all his movements were carried on in a new manner, like a person playing a part while the mind wandered to things remote from the matter in hand. What these things were Max could not guess. Sometimes Delane, in the midst of writing and going over figures and plans, would get up, go to the window and stand looking down into the street; or open drawers and read letters just perused, or answer some question irrelevantly while talking business with Kendall. Sometimes Delane would ask Max quite suddenly what his sister and Miss Anderton were doing that evening; whether it would be all right for him to run up to see them, or if they had been to some show lately come to town.

Max knew that the introduction to Susan had had a definite effect upon his partner,—their first meeting having been followed by another evening at the Kendall house and by several talks over the telephone when Delane was trying to arrange to have Miss Anderton and Mrs. Wainwright come to tea with him some afternoon at one of the uptown

hotels where there was very good dance music. The ladies in Marlborough Street, however, had not accepted any of his invitations; but not through any disinclination on the part of Susan. She liked him. Max knew this and could only attribute the new attitude of Delane to something which had been awakened in him by the contact with his sister's friend. Any possible effect made by Florence he thought must have been too slight to cause even a ripple on the placid surface of the unromantic Jim, absorbed to his ears in the details of his business. Perhaps Kendall was a much too confirmed bachelor to know what gentle currents may do when flowing in a particular direction.

However, the newer manner was evident to Max, not given, as we know, to subtleties; and he especially noticed it on this particular day three of four weeks after the introduction of Delane to the Kendall home, when he proposed a theater party for the "four of them," explaining as a matter of brotherly feeling, apparently, that it would be better not to include Nora, as her presence would over-balance the party in the number of women. For a moment Max felt lost for an excuse, feeling sure that Florence would not care for such an entertainment made, as it undoubtedly would be if Delane were the host, with a certain amount of show and followed by an elaborate supper after the theater; but he could not go on evading Delane's proposals indefinitely.

"When I go home to dinner I will ask them," was all he said.

"Why not telephone?" Delane questioned.

"But there is no hurry. Any night will do."

"I feel like the theater. I should like to see a ripping good show to-night," Delane went on, in the rather enthusiastic manner of a child.

Max thought that any arrangement for to-night was out of the question; but he only said he believed his sister had an engagement for the evening, and that he would ask her to name a possible night.

Delane looked at Max curiously for a moment, a certain hardness showing in his face. He started to say something, exclaiming "I wonder," and then stopped suddenly to turn again to his desk and papers.

"What do you wonder?" Max inquired cheerfully.

"Nothing," was all Delane answered. Then added, "Your sister seems to have a lot to do."

Max made no reply; it was hardly the concern of Delane what Florence had or had not to do. From the very first moment of his connection with this man, when he had talked informally with him about his land in the suburbs lying undeveloped for want of capital and had seen in the enthusiasm of Delane's attention and subsequent interest in the subject a broad horizon of possibilities opening out should the Delane money be invoked,—these possibilities always linked with the idea of the added advantage they would bring to his sister—Max had resolved that Florence should never enter even remotely into any side of the relation, should such a relationship for business reasons grow up between

himself and Delane. The introduction of Jim to his house had been a matter of only common decency after the growth of the close connection in which they found themselves. It had been a pity, Max was beginning to realize, that the advent of Susan Anderton had formed a newer and stronger link between Delane and his own life, as it existed beyond the deep chasm of State Street, than he supposed the mere bringing of Florence into the scene ever could have furnished.

But Delane was speaking again. "I have called up Miss Anderton several times," he said, "to see if she and your sister would come out with me some afternoon to dance and meet my sister Nora. Nora would like Miss Anderton awfully well—she's met Mrs. Wainwright, you know. Nora doesn't know a great lot of people. That is, not your kind of people. It would be fine. But your sister always seems to be going somewhere or doing something, and Miss Anderton says she cannot come without her. I really think, though, she would like to."

Quite likely, thought Max. It would not be at all unlike Susan to wish to make the acquaintance of Miss Nora Delane.

It never had occurred to Kendall that Delane was a social climber. It hardly seemed likely now, even in view of his last remarks and the recent attempts to entertain Susan and Florence; as the Kendall place in the world of social affairs was too inconspicuous because of its very surety for Delane to place his hopes upon any ladder which might be

placed by Mrs. Wainwright for him to ascend. There seemed to be a simpler idea behind all this than possible schemes for the advancement of sister Nora's ambitions. Besides, Delane was a man peculiarly without a standard in regard to the matter of class distinctions. In his own view of things, he undoubtedly considered the status of Kendall and all that went with Kendall's sphere in life as little better than his own. Perhaps not so good, as the money was all on his side. That there was a difference he saw clearly; but the difference did not bear any advantage perceptible to him. He was quite happy as he was,—rich and powerful. No; there certainly was something else, Max concluded, that had caused what he named to himself as moodiness in his partner.

A few days later Max was again assailed on the matter of the theater. There had been excuses and evasions, and it now seemed necessary to arrange rather definitely some party by which Delane would be thrown again with Florence and Susan. A journey to Greenvale was suggested, with the idea that the Delane motor should take Florence and her brother and Miss Anderton out to the much-talked-of property. Delane seemed agreeable to this plan, although he insisted that it would be something of a shock to the ladies to find the place a barren wilderness of dumping grounds, a desultory ash heap, as it were. "Like a state tour of inspection with nothing to inspect" was the way he put it. He wondered just what lay behind this sudden desire

of Max for Mrs. Wainwright and her friend to visit Greenvale.

"Do you take much stock in all this garden business Miss Anderton was talking about?" he asked.

"A lot of damned rot, in my opinion," came back quickly from Kendall.

Probably he was right. Perhaps the garden city idea does not appeal to the great American Commonwealth, where the people, if they want gardens, will have them as they jolly well please without any fuss about municipal planning and the picturesque lay-out of streets. Moreover, ugliness is so taken for granted in our mushroom communities that the ideal of beauty is not only not looked for but is not even given a thought.

Of course, Delane was glad to hear his partner speak in this way. He would not like to feel that he was associated in business with a visionary sort of person or one whose imagination might run riot in dealing with a commonplace proposition.

The day on which the motor trip was undertaken was quite the worst imaginable, being very cold and dusty as only Boston can be gray and dusty and cold in the winter time. As Greenvale was somewhere beyond Dorchester, Delane proposed that they should stop on the way and pick up his sister, who always went out in the motor in the afternoon.

"It will give you a chance to meet Nora," he said, addressing Miss Anderton. As no reply was

made to this, he added, "My sister has been awfully keen about meeting you ever since she heard that you had come to visit Mrs. Wainwright."

Apparently Miss Delane was expecting to be picked up, as there was nothing casual in her appearance as she stood at the top of the granite steps leading up to the Delane house. She was dressed as sumptuously as the occasion permitted—with a few extra flourishes to make an ordinary event appear in the light of an occasion—in a gown of horizon blue cloth with a huge muff of gray squirrel and gray velvet hat with numerous touches of gold.

"Won't the ladies come in?" she called to Jim, as she came down the steps.

But the "ladies" seeming vague, the necessary introductions were made and the motor started for Greenvale.

Max was a little annoyed that Nora Delane was in the party, as he was sure she would talk throughout the afternoon, allowing the other two women little chance for the contemplation of Greenvale.

Susan perceived at once that he was displeased; and she also realized that in the arrangement of the car, Max and Delane occupying the two fold-up chairs and the three women sitting somewhat closely together in the broad seat at the back, there was something distinctly annoying for Florence in the near relation of the Delanes to herself and Max. It was not that Florence did not try to talk with Nora—this being slightly difficult, owing to the continuous chatter of the lady in question—but the

juxtaposition of Delane and Max directly in front of her seemed to hold a significance all its own. Her brother, firmly made, with the clear, healthy skin which had come down through many generations of Kendalls; Delane, quite as strong a cut of a man—in fact somewhat bigger in a purely physical way—but with a certain indeterminate aspect, an irregularity of side face in spite of his good looks, seemed to stand for Florence as the summing up of the two sides of life from which each had come. Why, being as strong as Delane in outward aspect, with the added advantage of refinement and culture, should Max not be as powerful as the other man in the big ways of life? Why had it been necessary for a Kendall, descended straight from the old stock that swayed the country in its early struggles, to lean now for support both financially and in order to make a success of his own life, upon this representative of the new, heterogeneous America?

Delane, for the most part, sat looking straight ahead, occasionally turning to Susan in the other corner when that lady addressed him. Susan was able thus to observe him carefully, perhaps more critically to “take him in” than had been possible on the former occasions in the Kendall drawing-room. This afternoon Delane appeared to be remarkably preoccupied, all but indifferent to Florence, who was sitting just behind him. Florence’s extreme quietness may have been the cause of this, but there seemed also to be a kind of timidity, a self-consciousness when Mrs. Wainwright roused

herself to some casual remark about the country through which they were passing. Delane's short "Yes's" and "No's" in reply were in distinct contrast to his former conversations, when he had seemed to be almost over-doing his efforts to please.

While the car was rolling along through an extremely densely populated section of the suburbs, Susan's remark, "Houses, houses endlessly, and you would build more!" caused Delane to turn to her, laughing.

When Florence asked what the joke was, he immediately returned to his contemplation of the landscape and half shyly, almost like a child that has been rebuked, answered that he supposed there was none. Which led to a short silence, most welcome after Nora's incessant chatter; but it did not last long as that indefatigable person took the situation again upon her shoulders in a burst of anecdote about Jim at home and his pet cat. The hearty Jim pictured with a pet cat upon his knee was too much for Susan, who laughed heartily, causing Delane to turn in his embarrassment to Max and plunge into a lengthy conversation about the relative width of streets and the best sort of pavement.

And now, in a vista of gasometers and low squatters' houses, Greenvale appeared on the horizon behind the proud proclamation of its name done in yellow letters on a pea-green background, the whole signboard looming up twenty feet above the ground as a welcome bit of color in the grayness all about. The arrival was certainly something of a shock,

made in clouds of dust and smoke blowing over from a near-by factory. But Susan said nothing; she merely looked.

"If the roads aren't too bad, John," Delane said to the chauffeur through the speaking tube, "take us over a little of the land. You can't get any idea from here just how much we own," he added, turning to the ladies. "It really is *some* place."

"'Some' quite describes it," Susan said, "as I am sure no adjective of a more definite meaning would hit the mark. I had no idea it was quite so dreary as this."

"You see a part of our property is used as a dump for the city carts, so that the land can be filled in. It is marshy in places," Delane replied, trying to find an adequate apology for the very untidy appearance of the place.

The motor bumped along a newly cut road, where at intervals sticks in the ground showed where the pavement would be. One or two of the streets had been named, such as Myrtle Avenue and Gardenia Terrace.

"Surely," Susan laughed, "you will not use such names throughout the place. If you do, it is an admission on your part that you intend to have gardens and a bit of beauty; although I have my doubts about even a dandelion thriving here."

This was good, Max thought, and might lead Susan to a properly enthusiastic view of the situation in spite of its present uncouthness.

"My partner here has never approved of my

names for the streets," Delane said. "He calls them sentimental."

"Comic, rather, I should say," Susan went on. "But you certainly must do something nice for the streets with the fancy names. It might be an interesting experiment to see if the houses on Myrtle Avenue, where perhaps a few maples could be persuaded to grow, would rent more quickly than the ones on East First Street, for example; for at the present moment I can think of nothing but numbers by which to designate these very uncomfortable roads."

"That is not a bad idea of yours, Miss Anderton," Delane said, after a pause. "And we could charge higher rents for the houses on the streets with trees and gardens," he added, with a sudden inspiration.

"You have appealed to his pocketbook," Florence exclaimed, "and he will surely follow your lead."

"In your signboard," Susan said, as the motor turned again into the main road, "you show another instance of trying to make Greenvale effective. There must be lawns, of course, if you allow that very green sign to lure people to this district."

There was something quite odd in the manner in which Delane seemed agreeable to everything that Susan Anderton said. Almost any criticism of Greenvale, verging as it did this afternoon so often on the sarcastic, made its effect with him. But in his attitude toward Florence there was still something aloof; it was almost as if she were not in the car.

On the way home Nora suggested that the party

stop at her house for tea; but as Florence and her friend thought they had had about as much of that rather too effusive young woman as they could stand at one time, excuses were made, and the cheerful Nora was dropped at her granite front-door steps as casually as she had been picked up there several hours before. Max and Delane were to proceed on downtown to put in another period of work at their office, so Susan and Florence had their tea alone upon the arrival home.

Susan was rather tired, but her mind was busy in the agitation of certain things, Greenvale being not the most important of them. She had been impressed this afternoon by the somewhat strange manner of Delane toward Florence. It was quite as if he were afraid of her. Yet Susan knew this was really not the case. Florence had always been too nice, too simply frank for him to suspect or feel anything in her attitude that was not of the kindest motive. There is another kind of feeling which in its early stages often takes on the appearance of a half-shy fear. Susan remembered rather innocuous young men who, later professing an undying devotion to her, had first passed through these stages which are so typical of the symptoms of incipient love. It would be curious if in the same situation Delane, the man of affairs, should appear in this light. But then, thought Susan, he is really only a boy at heart. What caused her wonder as she sipped her tea was something quite definitely linked with alarm. Her steady gaze at Florence for a

moment made that lady ask, "Why are you so serious, dear, all of a sudden?"

Susan was ready with her answer. "I wonder if you terrify Delane."

"Terrify him!" Florence exclaimed, in a naturally surprised tone.

"I mean nothing definite, of course," Susan went on quickly; "but you must realize, I think, that Delane is far more interested in me—far more natural with me, which better expresses what I mean—than he is with you." She paused again, inspecting the bottom of her teacup; then looking up at Florence, said rather vaguely, "I was just wondering, that is all."

Florence laughed, and Susan continued, "But you know you are a terribly fine person; a much finer person in every sense of the word than I am, for instance."

"How absurd you are," her companion interposed.

"Nevertheless you are; and I am sure you must know what I am trying to get at. You are *precieuse*. It is impossible that you should not be so. I consider myself, on the other hand, an amalgamation of all sorts of things. I am an American whom Europe has developed amazingly, taking on various colors and traditions of things. That is why I am a simpler person for Delane to approach than you are, although in reality mine is a far more complicated personality than yours; or than yours ever will be,—which, of course my dear, you must not take as a disparagement of your own unmatchable

qualities. Would that I had them. It is this very contrast in our types which we must consider, which we must play to the best advantage."

"'Play'?" Florence repeated.

"Yes; make the most of, if that is clearer," Susan continued. "Delane is an impressionable person. He is not hard with the perversity of tight facts,—really not so hard as Max is. But his horizon is limited. The sky is not lowering, filled with heavy clouds; it is open and clear and ready to be illumined with splendid colors. However, it is necessary to a proper display that the right person shall furnish the light."

"By which you mean you are the right person in this particular situation," Florence said, smiling, remembering the days in Paris when it was always Susan who seemed to be exactly the right person in the right place at all times.

"I am perfectly willing that you should take Delane in hand," Florence went on. "I have my duties, as you know. I cannot allow myself to become absorbed in the business ventures of my brother, although I have talked to him most seriously about Greenvale. Since seeing the place, I feel quite incapable of visions."

"There you are," Susan said quickly, hitting the mark she wanted. "You and Max are alike. You are too nice to see beyond the dusty vistas of bad roads. But I believe Delane can see, or rather, will be made to see beyond the present ugly realities, if he is properly awakened."

"I give you full leave," Florence said gayly.

Susan looked at her again intently for a moment. Perhaps the "full leave" would be a thing of vaster proportions than the delicate Florence in her soft blue gown realized at the time. She appealed then so strongly to Susan as a person completely detached, aloof from every connection, even when the connection should be one of sentiment or affection, that it terrified her. The danger of something that should strike this aloofness, this cool attitude toward life, was what had impressed Susan very forcibly just now. If she were given full leave, then she might do something big, something rather better than bringing flowers out of the wilderness. The afternoon had been very full of impressions for Susan; but nothing was so strong as the realization of what Delane's so-called moodiness really meant, and what would happen if the remoteness of Florence's personality should suddenly be swung into the range of a desperately intense character, belonging quite to that other side of life to which Max Kendall already was allied.

CHAPTER VI

“Increase of wages will not solve the problem; social education is a duty no one must shirk. . . . The tendencies of the age are toward extravagance. . . . In a hundred and fifty-seven cases which we investigated in New York in the factory of the Ritters and White Company we found the girls spending four fifths of their wages upon clothes. What can one expect then? These girls must eat, live, and usually help support a family. . . . If they fall, are not the tendencies of the age quite as much to blame as the wage scale? . . . Education, a social conscience. . . .”

Mrs. Williamson Sterret of Philadelphia was talking before a special meeting of certain workers from the Trumbull Square house—what might be called the Back Bay contingent—at the home of Mrs. Oglesby Watterson. She had been especially asked to come over from her beautiful country place in the suburbs of Philadelphia to speak this afternoon. She was looked upon as something of an authority in matters relating to the great social evil which a few years ago caused such a zealous investigation throughout the country. Mrs. Williamson Sterret was becomingly gowned in a dress of the latest mode. Her jaunty purple hat and ropes of pearls about her neck, taken in combination with the fact that the

dear lady was most apparently rouged and powdered, produced a rather curious effect when she made her various pronouncements concerning the extravagance of the working girl.

The audience was composed entirely of women, who in their smart afternoon frocks appeared to have just dropped in on their way to tea or a bridge party. There was an *odeur de société* in the closely packed room that suggested some luxurious affair of one sort or another distinctly in contrast to the usual stuffy committee-meeting smell. Florence Wainwright was in the crowd. Although this special branch of sociological work was something to which she had given little attention, yet she had been attracted to this "talk" on account of the episode with Gracie Linton. She wondered if Mrs. Williamson Sterret had looked deep enough into the subject to find the root of all the mischief as she felt she saw it vaguely in her own mind.

"They must not only be paid such wages as will enable them to live decently, but they must be taught how to use those wages. . . . The constant attempt to be like the people above them in the social scale is most pernicious. It is difficult nowadays to distinguish between the classes, because the working girl dresses so well and really wears her clothes like a lady." . . . Mrs. Williamson Sterret was droning on in the same humdrum voice, unemotionally, coldly, clutching a multitude of facts neatly written in a little pigskin notebook with gold corners. . . . "We may claim nothing—society can demand noth-

ing from the uneducated girl who sells herself to get a frock in order that she may cut the same figure as her neighbor. . . . During a recent strike of stitchers in a shirt-waist factory, every girl wore a fur coat when she marched down the street to make a demonstration for higher wages. Although her body was warm, her stomach was undoubtedly empty and her soul lost." . . . Mrs. Sterret had allowed herself to soar a bit into the heights of eloquence. She stopped to take a sip of ice water from the engraved glass tumbler at her side while her remarks sank into the minds of her listeners.

Then came lists of factories, wages paid, and figures showing the percentage of girls who had fallen into the ways of sin. Statistics seem always so useful, such a bulwark for the righteous of this world to fall back upon when they are combating the social evils of life.

Florence was listening intently, but through all the droning there was not a single thought that struck her vitally. A Gracie Linton—many Gracie Lintons—hovering in the background of the speaker's heavily embroidered dress, meant more to her than all that was being said. She was wondering, too, if Gracie Linton had ever worked in a factory or shop. She was wondering if Gracie had neglected her stomach in order to clothe herself in a smart frock, and then as a last resort— No; she did not think so. Of course, she had her own theory. She would like to hear the speaker from Philadelphia explode it, or show her that she was work-

ing on a false hypothesis; for certainly Florence's idea held in it less of credit to humanity than the one usually worked upon in such matters.

"We have reached the high-water mark of salaries and wages. To demand more will lead to a more wholesale closing down of great mercantile establishments than we have yet seen. . . . We must face the problem of unemployment after a period of thoughtless waste in the manner of living. The girl out of work is a more likely victim to the great evil of which I am speaking. . . ." (It will be noted that Mrs. Sterret never mentioned this evil by any definite name. It was for her a great abstract horror which she must face in her efforts to find its solution.) "The girl who has been able to keep straight will fall as her sisters have done, and all our endeavors must be toward giving her a suitable environment and educating her in the ways of life to keep her above and beyond the abyss of sin."

Mrs. Sterret paused. Evidently she had made a great point. There was more droning; a report was read from a clergyman in West Philadelphia; also a letter from the head of an industrial school for women, and Mrs. Williamson Sterret announced that as she was taking the "five o'clock" to New York, she must close her remarks. A thin, elderly woman went forward and shook hands with her; and in a buzz and chatter there was a general movement toward the distinguished guest of the afternoon.

But Florence remained sitting in the back part of

the room, rather lost in the confusion. A chauffeur, carrying a fur coat, appeared in the hallway and asked if Mrs. Brownson Brown was there; and two vacant-faced youths with notebooks emerged from a doorway where they evidently had concealed themselves to write up the lecture; but just why this meeting had been open only to women was more than Florence could understand. Certainly the innocuous character of the talk would have done credit to a mothers' conference at which babies and the proper training of the infant mind were under discussion. Perhaps if Mrs. Williamson Sterret had not had a train to catch, she would have revealed things quite too shocking for the ears of a mixed company.

While Florence was wondering—wondering about many things; seeing very little of her surroundings, filled as she was with the vision of a foul-smelling restaurant where pale-faced waitresses served painted girls and where rather stupid-looking men sat lounging—the doors were thrown open into another room in which tea appeared laid out in an immaculate array of silver and china under the soft pink light of tall candelabra. The afternoon at Umber's was still quite vivid to her. How little real viciousness there seemed to be in it all; only hopeless degradation. Here in this scented drawing-room, among these rather stout and mostly wholly unintelligent-looking women, there was for her a feeling of a more actual viciousness than in the other picture. Was not the remedy, the panacea for the whole thing, something rather simple? Was it not

merely that the remedy had always been applied at the wrong end? It would be interesting to know. She could not drink tea. She went out unobserved, and calling a taxi, jumped in and drove to the South End. She was going to see Gracie Linton.

The address Gracie gave her had reposed in her pocketbook ever since the encounter with the girl at Umber's. The house was not difficult to find, and Florence dismissed the cab at the corner and walked down the almost deserted street, at the end of which two negroes were engaged in an altercation in the middle of the road. The bell jangled noisily, and presently a bedraggled-looking woman in a dirty shawl and apparently little else peeped out of the door, which she opened only a crack.

"Does Miss Linton live here?" Florence asked.

"Miss who?" almost screamed the person inside, who might veritably have been the renowned Witch of Endor returned to earth to preside over this particular part of town.

"Miss Gracie Linton," Florence repeated.

"Oh, Gracie!" and immediately the door swung open.

"I won't come in," Florence hurriedly added, catching the vista of a very dark hallway and a dirty child playing on the floor.

"She's probably just on her way out," the woman explained, her face transforming itself into a horrid grin.

"Will you tell her a lady would like to see her for a moment."

At which the keeper of the door cackled noisily, then turning around, exclaimed, "Here she be now."

Gracie came out quickly to where Florence was, at first looking at her curiously and then smiling. "Well, of all things, this beats the devil!" she said.

"How are you?" Florence replied.

"Fine, and how's yourself?" Gracie was ready in response.

"If you are going out, I will walk along a bit with you," Florence went on.

"That's all right, I ain't going anywhere in particular."

A promenade through the South End with Gracie Linton was not quite Mrs. Wainwright's idea, but the possibility of a quiet chat with her in some restaurant or dairy lunch remote in character from the celebrated Umber's. This sort of place was soon found; and Gracie and Florence were sitting opposite each other at a small table in a corner. Florence ordered a pot of tea and Gracie said she would have a cup of black coffee, and the occasion seemed conducive to a good talk.

Then came a moment when Florence was at a loss how to begin. There was one thing she wanted to find out. How would she go about it?

"By the way," she finally said; "you know meeting you the other night at that restaurant was quite odd."

"Not half as odd as it was to see you there," Gracie replied good-naturedly.

"I think we were both surprised," Florence went on. Then after a pause, "Do you go there often?"

"Every blessed night of my life," was the quick response.

Then there was another pause, in which Gracie looked first at her coffee, then at Mrs. Wainwright. At last she said, "I guess you don't 'get me.'"

Florence knew what she meant, and to stop further beating about the bush, said as charmingly as she was able, "Of course I do. I have been a great deal in this part of the city. I may not have seen you until the other day, but I have run into a great many girls like you on the streets; and that is why I am here to-night,—to ask you one question, which I hope you will answer quite seriously."

"Fire away, dearie," Gracie replied, assuming for the moment her other manner of the Umber Café variety; in fact, her usual attitude toward people, which had fallen from her somewhat when she first met Florence.

"I want to know if you do any work in the daytime."

Gracie laughed heartily at this. For a moment it seemed that she would have difficulty in stopping.

"Well, you are a freshy," she finally said. "What do you know about that? Me work!" And again she went off into peals of laughter.

"I just wondered," Florence added.

"I ain't done a day's work for years," Gracie said, with some vehemence. "Why should I work? Don't I get my dough all right, and much easier than I would sweating my life out in a factory for some fat calf of a bloater? Ain't I well dressed?"

And she jauntily tipped her hat to one side,—a new hat, by the way, and rather pretty and suited to her.

"I suppose you never have had any regular work," Florence pursued, bound not to be discouraged by these outbreaks.

"Look here," Gracie began, evidently touched on a tender spot, "what damn business is it of yours if I ever worked or not? Have I asked you if you work? You know well enough what I do, although I am not in the back part of the telephone book among the painless dentists and beauty doctors."

The situation was becoming embarrassing. Several people had come into the lunch room, and Gracie's voice was by no means low.

"I only meant to be kind to you," Florence said, making a new effort. "If you like the sort of life you lead, I suppose it is all right, so far as you are concerned. I only wondered if you had ever known any different life—had ever lived in any place but this, or would like to get away from this neighborhood for a time."

"It ain't a farm you're talking about?" Gracie asked, in a more friendly tone of voice.

"No, not a farm,—nothing definite as yet."

"God deliver me from farms!" Gracie ejaculated.

"I was born on one of them."

"Really?"

"Yes, *really*; and if you want to bury yourself underground and eat worms for your daily food, go and live on a farm. It's that awful."

The subject seemed closed, and Gracie looked at

a small silver watch which she took out of her purse.

"Guess I must be hiking along, dearie," she said, again smiling. "I hear Umber's calling me," she sang to the tune of a popular song.

The two women emerged upon the dimly lighted street. Gracie's face looked very white in the glare from the restaurant window. She was going down the street; Florence, the other way. They said good-night, Gracie adding, by way of good manners, "Hope I see you again, old pal."

"I am sure you will," Florence replied quite seriously.

She realized that she had made absolutely no effect upon Gracie. It was as though the two women had not met. Yet Gracie was kind. She had proved it that night at Umber's when Florence was feeling ill. "There must be some loophole, some chink or cranny," thought Florence, "by which I may some time approach her." She was discouraged by this first attempt, but she would not allow herself to be faint-hearted and give up the matter now. If only a group of these Gracie Lintons could be sent away—to Greenvale perhaps, when that place should be built—to live or board in some decent manner, what might not happen? It was an interesting vision. Florence would like to make her work something personal to herself; would like to undertake some scheme for the betterment of these girls with a bit more of humanity in it than the routine of the industrial homes offered. She would see to it that they were amused,

always diverted; and she would see to it that they worked without feeling that they were slaves of mere drudgery. She came back to her old theory that it was the absence of congenial work—it was the lack of impulse to work—that fills our streets with the women of this class. Their minds ran in but one channel, to but one thing; and they plied their trade, not because they must eke out a living and clothe themselves up to the latest fashion, but because they did not choose to live in any other way. The overworked girl of the factory, the shop girl, completely fagged at the end of the day, could not be at the seat and root of the whole matter in the same degree as these professed prostitutes were. In other words, most of the girls of this latter group were not former factory employees or underpaid clerks, and had little relation to the great industrial question; but were what they were because they did not wish to be anything else. The key to the situation lay in the psychological matter of the girl's tendencies, and not in the demand for a higher wage.

However trying had been Florence's interview with Gracie, she was glad she had seen her. It gave her a firmer grasp on things. The droning of the afternoon in the Back Bay drawing-room had been rather confusing, distinctly depressing. Now she saw more clearly along certain lines. It was the tendency that must be changed,—always the tendency. The "back of people's minds" must be different before the great millenium could

arrive. On the way home what she had to do seemed well-defined, but all that she had been doing appeared rather futile.

She arrived home to hurry into evening dress and go with Max to a dinner and dance at a country club some miles out of town. Susan had left a note saying that she was off to pick up her friend, Mr. Rothwell, and bring him out to the dance. Who Rothwell was or from where he had appeared on the scene Florence was at a loss to know. She never had heard of him before. Of course there were numbers of Susan's European friends that she never had seen or heard of, but it struck her as slightly curious that this person whom Susan would unexpectedly take out to a dance had never been mentioned. Possibly his name had popped up in some of Susan's conversations, but Florence could not recall it at the moment. Very likely he is a recent acquisition—perhaps vaguely known on the "other side"—to whom Susan must show hospitality now that he has appeared in this country, thought Florence, as she sat beside her brother in the car that was taking them out to the club.

The club had that confused, heated, and somewhat restless aspect which is so typical of the country-club life of America. As Florence and Max came in, a number of people they knew were coming down the stairs into the main hallway. They stopped to chat a moment, and a florid-faced man with a gardenia in his buttonhole took Max's arm and murmured in a confidential manner something about

drinks. Max, beaming, departed with the red-faced one. Three very young men, arm in arm and slightly buoyed up for the evening by numerous cocktails they had just mixed in an upstairs room, sauntered into the living room and proceeded to the piano, where one of them began to play "jazz" music in a confused manner,—the proper style for jazz which is intoxicated ragtime.

But Florence could not find Susan. She was not in the ladies' dressing room and apparently had not arrived. Miss Anderton had a two-weeks guest privilege at the club and would be able to look after herself when she came in; but Florence was eager to meet the mysterious Rothwell. Several young girls in extremely low-cut gowns brushed past her, and she overheard one of them say, "I bet you he does before the evening's through"; and they went out into the hall to hang over the balustrade and talk and laugh with two youths who were awaiting them. Florence remembered herself at the *débutante* age, in her heavy satin dress with its discreet square-cut neck; and as she looked at the long expanse of back displayed by these girls, she thought how modern evening dress went up and down almost to the vanishing point, as the dances became ever more intimate and a gentleman's shirt stud could leave an imprint on an unromantic bosom. There was a strong odor of perfume. Some one was singing in the room below, and there was the noise of chairs and tables being moved. She went downstairs.

Susan and her friend had just arrived, and the gentleman was being introduced to Max. Florence joined the little group and Mr. Hubert Rothwell was presented. He was tall and erect, his head and features being of the same clear straightness as the rest of him. A rather high forehead and sensitive nose in combination with a slight hollowness of cheek gave him essentially the character of the Englishman of the upper class: university bred, but showing so unmistakably that finer and longer breeding which, taking itself quite casually, denotes its special kind of background. Perhaps in a certain over-refinement of the mouth appeared the only weakness in the type. His hair was dark and his eyes charmingly boyish in their frank, clear look.

All this Florence quite readily realized. It was the sort of impression easily received, correctly catalogued for what it meant. She knew the type; knew what to expect of it, where to meet it. It was the kind of thing, too, that one appreciates and sees more clearly out of its native environment than in it. The contrast to certain things American added always for Florence a special charm to the Englishman seen out of his own country.

Susan, who looked very happy to-night perhaps on account of her friend's appearance, was explaining how Mr. Rothwell had just arrived in Boston, after landing that day from one of the few steamers that still considered the old New England port a possible point of debarkation.

"You will see us to-night then at our best," Florence said.

"Or worst," Max put in.

"But all this is so typical," Florence went on.

"Yes," Susan laughed, "your country club is young America rampant."

The crowd was floating into the dining room, where the various groups of friends were sitting down at small tables. There was a din of voices, shrill and laughing. Every one seemed to be laughing in spite of the meagerness of anything like conversation.

"I have always heard that in this country you like to do things in crowds," Rothwell said, looking about the room.

"Yes; that is why the country-club idea is so popular," Florence replied. "There is no club life in a place of this sort as an Englishman would understand it. It is more like a cabaret."

"But I had some very good Scotch upstairs, which is certainly a friendly note." After a moment Rothwell asked, "And do you have these dances often?"

"About once a month. To-night is a special occasion; a celebrated 'jazz' band is over from New York. I seldom come out here and practically never dance since my husband's death; but it is unfortunate to get in a rut, isn't it, and I feel sometimes that I am doing that by absorbing myself too much in my work."

That the very lovely Mrs. Wainwright in a pale,

rose-colored dress, smiling across to Rothwell, should ever get in a rut or talk about her work like a tired business man was not only surprising to him, but distinctly out of the picture when he compared her to some of the English beauties he knew who, although splendid in the war, had been only too ready to drift back into the old routine of bridge, hunting, and society.

Susan saw his perplexity and chimed in with a cheerful, "Oh yes, every one works out here, even if it is only in an amateur way, like Mrs. Wainwright."

"You mean you have a hobby?" Rothwell said. "I am sure we all have that, although I do not know just what mine is at the present moment."

"Pursuing me across the Atlantic perhaps," Susan laughed.

Florence wondered if it were possible that this young Englishman were in love with Susan. She knew her friend had always evaded matrimony, and as she never talked of any particular man friend more often than the rest, it seemed very unlikely that there was any connection between the two bordering upon the romantic. Florence did not know why she hoped this was the situation; but she liked Mr. Rothwell very much in these first few moments of conversation with him. Besides, she could not fancy Miss Anderton married to anybody.

The dinner proceeded rapidly and Florence was unable to find out anything which would place Rothwell more clearly in her mind. She must wait until later, when she could get Susan alone.

She was not an idly curious person, but the tone of easy familiarity between her friend and this new acquaintance was certainly interesting. The bantering sort of remark that passed between them, such as Susan's, "You should have told that to Molly at Cowes," denoted very clearly the relation that existed here. They called each other by their first names and seemed to take one another for granted, quite as if they had been meeting every day. But why, in such a case, had Susan never mentioned her friend? In the evenings of quiet talk since Susan came to Marlborough Street she had said a great deal about her affairs past and present, but never a word of Rothwell, so far as Florence could recollect.

The dance was under way. Florence, declining Rothwell's invitation to dance, saw him take the floor with Susan. He danced superbly, and Florence decided she would not decline his next offer. He was not at all like Jack in physique, but he had a certain refinement and ease which was very suggestive of her husband and which caused her to look twice as he passed by. Two very pretty girls came over to her and asked who the very good-looking chap was, and she promised to introduce him. A slightly intoxicated youth, one of the trio who had been at the piano earlier in the evening, appeared and "shimmied" off with one of the girls. Then Florence found herself dancing with Rothwell. It was a waltz, the only thing she cared to do. She had never been very keen about the new steps,

and now that she danced so seldom, she felt comfortable only when waltzing or doing a foxtrot without variations. The trouble had always been, she thought, that there were so many variations and subtleties in every new dance that you either had to do them all, or none at all. She had chosen the latter course.

"I hope you will like Boston," Florence said, "that is, if you are to be here any length of time."

"I believe all Englishmen like Boston and Philadelphia," Rothwell answered. "Of course I have not seen New York yet."

"It was delightful that Susan could bring you out here to-night."

"Susan is wonderful; equal to every situation."

"There are so many different kinds of situations," Florence replied rather dryly.

"You mean big ones and little ones."

"Yes, something of the sort," Florence went on. "That Susan is equal to the big ones, I know very well. She is extraordinary. You see, we have been friends for years and years, which of course means, doesn't it, that we have encountered all kinds of situations together."

"And perhaps I am the latest," Rothwell added.

Florence looked at him, smiling. He was still something of a mystery.

"Perhaps," was all she said.

"And you wonder if she is equal to the present situation?"

"Not at all; for I am not sure there is one, *yet*."

The "yet" of Florence perhaps led Rothwell's mind to things a little more intricate than he had foreseen in the possibilities of the conversation. He remained silent.

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN IF I GO HANG—BANG BANG, ZING BANG, WHIZ! the music seemed to say.

They were sitting down, and Susan came along with Max.

"This is really a delightful surprise," Florence said.

"You mean Hubert?" Susan asked quite innocently.

"Yes," Florence continued; "but more especially the fact of your having produced here in this somewhat prosaic town one of your delightful little episodes."

"How could I help it?" Susan laughed. "The gentleman descended upon me. Besides, there is no episode."

"Of course not," Florence said in reply. "But you must admit it is in the nature of one to have you produce from nowhere, without even a word of introductory explanation, this charming friend of yours."

Rothwell and Kendall were talking together and did not hear this last passage.

"Life without footnotes is delightful, though," Susan answered.

GIVE—IT—UP, GIVE—IT—UP, ZIP, ZIP, BANG—the drums screamed. The music was becoming more riotous. Everything, due to the fact that the

orchestra had had several drinks, was getting noisier and madder than ever.

Susan danced again with Rothwell, and Max with his sister. A certain group of very young people were indulging in a perfect orgy of "shimmying," and one young man, having reached the state when things in general were going around, took the safe course of remaining absolutely in one place himself and moved slowly back and forth with his partner in a very close embrace.

Florence wondered if Rothwell noticed it. They were sitting in a corner of the room as far away from the music as they could get.

"You see our wickedness is all on the surface," she said, as her companion watched the more hilarious members of the crowd.

"Quite," he said. "It is all very youthful, isn't it?"

Florence was not at all sure that one could dismiss the scene in such a general way; at least for herself it could not be done. She had a dim vision of the subdued groups of men and women at Umber's Café. Those people had been subdued by the law. Here there were plenty of high lights to show that a large area of dryness only meant that the wetness was concentrated upon a select few who were drinking more than they ever had done in the old days. And such very young boys and girls. It was rather perplexing. Perhaps, thought Florence, the only uplift that needs to be done now is among the people of my own

class. The slums had been reformed, even if mankind as a whole were very little better for it.

"I hope you are to be in Boston for a time," Max said to Rothwell, as he sat down next to him.

"It is a bit indefinite," Rothwell answered. "I have matters to look over here. I can't tell just how long this will mean for me."

Susan had been watching him closely. Florence wondered if Rothwell's appearance in America was quite as sudden and unexpected to Susan as it was for her. Perhaps she would be able to learn very little from her friend concerning this person and his plans.

"Of course my stay is quite for some time," Susan interposed. "My lawyer in New York writes that my uncle's affairs cannot possibly be settled for a year."

Was this meant to place something definitely for Rothwell? Florence would like to know. Very likely the unexpectedness of his arrival upon the scene made it necessary in some way for Susan to disclose as much as possible of her plans without seeming to say too much.

Suddenly Miss Anderton said, "You must meet Mr. Kendall's associate in the land venture I spoke of."

Florence could not see why Delane should be dragged into this evening which was so completely out of the scope of anything connected with the Delanes and their interests.

But Susan went on, undeterred by the somewhat

surprised look which Florence gave her. "He would amuse you."

"Jim Delane is a fine fellow," Max asserted. "You must lunch with me some day at my club, and I will have Delane there."

"Excellent," Rothwell answered, with that note of light enthusiasm in his voice so typical of his class.

Delane, as no more than a name just now casually mentioned, could mean very little for him; but his "excellent" contained so much of the sense that he was agreeable to any plan that might be made for him that Florence looked at him, smiling in distinct approval at seeing his manner quite what she knew it would be. Rothwell caught the look and smiled back, really only getting in her glance the sense of her pleasure in the situation and little seeing the deeper pleasure in himself that was behind it. Susan also saw the "look," the special look of Florence, and into it she read something else. She thought she saw a gleam in Florence's eyes which recalled the old Paris days and which she had missed in the present environment. It made her catch her breath.

She turned to Rothwell and asked him something about his trunks, over which there evidently was a difficulty.

"I am sure to get them to-morrow," he answered.

"Will you dine with us next Thursday, Mr. Rothwell?" Florence said.

"With the greatest pleasure, and thank you so much."

BANG—WHIZ—ZIPITY—ZIP—I DON'T GIVE A RIP—the music was blazing forth again, endlessly restless, infinitely noisy.

There was another dance; and our little group of friends started home. When Florence and Susan were getting their wraps, they encountered some very breezy youths on the stairs.

"We'll take the noise sharks back in my car," one of them was saying, referring to the orchestra who now, after more drinks and wilder playing, would certainly have to be taken back in some one's car.

"Fine! Where is Dolly Saltus?" another boy said, and proceeded to stumble and slip down several stairs.

"Mind your step, Billy," someone shouted. "You aren't flying now, you know."

When Florence and Susan were alone after they got home that night, Florence plunged at once into the mystery of Rothwell's sudden appearance.

"You see, I have known him for several years," Susan replied to her friend's inquiries. "I used to meet him at Cowes when I paid my annual visit in August to Molly Wethersly. Hubert was always at Molly's. He is such a nice fellow. I hope you like him."

"I do like him very much," Florence said quietly. "But how did Mr. Rothwell know you were here?"

"Oh, I had written to him," Susan answered, apparently a little impatient at her friend's curiosity.

"You never spoke about him to me," Florence continued.

"If I talked about every one I know, you would be bored to death."

So far Mrs Wainwright had not learned much. A casual acquaintance met in the Isle of Wight during the yachting season was how Susan had presented this friend: yet casual acquaintances did not announce themselves by wireless and were not hustled off to parties on the night of their arrival.

"It is delightful that he is to be here for a time," Florence remarked.

"Yes, isn't it?" And there was something in Susan's tone which seemed to put an end to the discussion of the gentleman in question. It still seemed as if some mystery hung over him; as if there were something about Rothwell which Susan chose to keep especially to herself.

"He forms a pleasant link with your life on the other side," Florence said after a moment, not wishing to drop the subject.

"As though you didn't do that, my dear, more distinctly than he ever could."

"Oh, yes, of course," Florence said lightly. "But then, I am not of the picture any more. I am essentially American."

"Hardly that, but Bostonian certainly."

"By the way, I have found an apartment," Susan went on. "It is an adorable little place in the West End, near the river. I know I am going to love it."

"You mean we are to lose you?" Florence said, really sorry at the thought of her friend's departure.

"Yes, you are to lose so much of me; but my

morning walks along the embankment will always end here. You see I am sub-renting. The place is charmingly furnished. When I am settled, we must have a housewarming, and I shall give a dinner party for you and Max, Hubert, and Delane."

"Delane—really?" Florence said, a little surprised.

"Yes; I shall include Delane, although I draw the line at sister Nora."

"But," Florence interposed; "do you think it necessary?"

"Nothing is ever necessary," Susan answered quickly. "I loathe necessary things. But it will be amusing."

CHAPTER VII

Florence's dinner party had been rather slighter in its success than she had anticipated. It was one of those evenings when a "hitch" of some sort occurs, and there seems to be a blight on the proceedings. On that particular night there had been no definite moment when things went wrong—no traceable lack of sympathy among the guests—but things were not smooth, not tuned up to concert pitch as Florence wished them to be. As she thought back about it, she could not say what had happened to cause the drop in the atmosphere. She had tried to make the evening something of a formal introduction of Rothwell to a few of her friends. Besides Constance Floyd, she had asked two students from Harvard who bore names well-known in New York society. These, she hoped, might be able to do something for Rothwell when he should make his appearance in the metropolis. Also, there was Miss Grainger, a charming young Boston girl who had just made her *début* and was to dance in the annual performance of the "Knitting Bee," a club of young women not to belong to which denotes something wrong in the social status of the *débutante*. Thus the party consisted of eight, with Susan and Rothwell and Max. Certainly these people were well chosen to entertain one another. Nothing was

lacking in the scheme of the thing. However, there had been the failure to attain anything more than a certain dead level of the conventional dinner party. Perhaps Florence had reckoned too well; had too consciously chosen her guests with the effect of a special appearance in view. Or it may have been that Rothwell had seemed to retreat into himself upon receiving the rather too effusive greeting of Miss Floyd and her apparent effort to make herself liked by him—Constance always outdid herself for Englishmen—in contrast to a certain coldness she showed toward Susan. Susan, moreover, had been a little less entertaining than usual. She appeared that night more in the manner of an observer, of some one looking on at things rather than of them.

What she particularly "looked on" at was Florence's growing interest in Rothwell; her absorption in him at dinner, and the way she managed to secure quiet moments of conversation with him later in the evening. But in these slight passages Susan could detect nothing in his attitude that showed any special interest which Florence held for him. He was wholly charming throughout the affair, appearing quite as absorbed in the merry chatter of the débutante and the more serious attempts of Miss Floyd to hold his attention as he was later when sitting with Florence in a corner. All of which was quite as it should be. In Florence there was noticeable again the old brilliancy of manner, her former happy self peeping out at odd moments in chance remarks. It recalled Paris days. Her gown, too,

something a bit more arranged for a definite effect, was noted by Susan.

After the evening was over she realized the "hitch" quite as Florence had. Perhaps she had not made the proper effort to swing things along in her customary way. Telephoning Florence the next morning, she told her how charming the party was; but in her friend's tone she detected a feeling that things might have been better.

"I hope," Florence said, "that Mr. Rothwell had a good time."

"I am sure he did," Susan answered readily.

"I fear our Harvard boys were too young for us," Florence resumed.

"You should never think that, my dear," Susan laughed back. "Youth is better than champagne."

Susan's party was different. From the moment Delane appeared with the news that the franchise for the railway to Greenvale had been granted, things went along merrily. Max made delectable cocktails; and Delane, after drinking a number of them, talked most enthusiastically of the way business would go forward now that the great obstacle was overcome.

"Crofton was wonderful," he explained. "I was in the House all the morning, and when the matter hung by a thread—a certain group of old fogies being dead against us—Crofton swung everything to our side by securing the vote of his crowd. And let me tell you, it is a great crowd. When those men, McClancy and Knight and Foley, go out for a thing, they get it. Max, old boy," slapping his partner on

the back, "this is going to be a great night. Greenvale is born. Before it was only conceived; but now it is born. It is here! Our houses are not built; our streets are still mud ruts, but the spring will see it all changed. Lawson and Hobbes telephoned me an hour ago to get the rights to the corner piece on the eastern boundary. They want a long lease and will build at once. Here's to Greenvale; may she boom and boom, and then some!"

Susan was amused and exhilarated by the gusto of Delane, and she entered into the spirit of the thing whole-heartedly.

"Bravo!" she exclaimed. "To Jim Delane and Max Kendall, the land boomers. May they live long and see a multitude of babies born in the great suburb."

Max was beaming; and Rothwell, standing apart, laughed heartily at Susan's peroration. But to Florence it was a little overdone. She loathed the lack of sensitiveness in the man in his loud acclamation of his success. To her it was not funny, and she knew Rothwell's amusement arose from the oddity of the situation. He was discovering for himself the great American "I am." He was seeing in the flesh one of the great American adventurers and getting infinite enjoyment out of it all.

"You mustn't count your birds before they are hatched," she said, not wishing to appear too definitely out of the picture.

"But my dear Mrs. Wainwright," Delane began

again; "it is sure, sure as you are standing there, that we have a great thing in Greenvale. Our agents are selling lots as fast as pancakes, and we are to build a lot of apartment houses—even have the prospect of getting a school put up there. All these things were only waiting till we should get the electric cars through to our property. Well, we have got 'em. You can hear now the conductors on them shouting, 'Next stop, Greenvale.' "

"And see a lot of ugly women with Boston bags getting out of the cars," Susan interrupted.

"You're a magician, Delane," Rothwell said.

"Yes; that's what I am," Delane replied, smiling at Rothwell, whom he was beginning to like. "That's what Kendall and I are. We're magicians. We're 'canny,' you see; and the 'canny' people always get there."

"And now for dinner," Susan said, as the servant appeared in the doorway. "My table decorations are green and yellow. You see everything is going to be in honor of Greenvale."

This apartment that Miss Anderton had rented furnished belonged to a man of somewhat large experience in the really fine things of life. It was particularly well suited to her individuality and in the decorations of the dining-room there was a warmth of color and richness in objects of excellent style and design which splendidly set off Susan's personality. Two Chinese punch bowls on a Jacobean side table between massive bronze candelabra, and the cupboard of royal red crockery were among

the distinctive articles of this setting; while the heavy design of the wall paper in deep blues and gold furnished a most excellent background. The group at the table with masses of yellow roses in the center—their green leaves making the scheme just noted by Susan—was remarkably intense in its individual traits; while the laughter and chatter was carelessly informal. It was all in decided contrast to the atmosphere of Florence's party on the previous Thursday.

Florence felt this as she sat there, a little self-conscious of her mood, which made it difficult for her to fall into the general merrymaking of the evening. It was not that she did not wish to, but the highest key she could strike would probably fall short of Susan's more happily attained notes. Susan was always expansive, and it was really only at such times as this that her expansiveness did not stand out beyond the particular scene. She was completely herself to-night,—the tone which the evening had taken since Delane's flourish being wholly in her vein.

In addition to the hostess's ample provision for the dinner in the matter of food, Delane, after hearing the result of the franchise, had brought from home several bottles of gin. Max had been able to produce some of his dearly bought Scotch, and all this added to the merriment. Rothwell felt that he was having the best time since his arrival in America. Delane talked a good deal; but, sitting at Susan's right, was easily managed by that lady

not to talk too much or over-indulge in his own special topic of the night, which of course was land and railways. He seemed to be developing a social perspective which made him fit into the scene more naturally than he had done on the former occasions when Florence had had opportunities of observation. Or was it, she wondered, merely because the atmosphere now was more like the one to which he was accustomed in his own small experience of such things?

"And now, Mr. Delane," Susan was saying, "in the first flush of your success I am sure you will promise that I may have tulips and a cottage and live in Gardenia Terrace."

"Anything, everything you like," he answered, laughing. "You may transport all the fine things you left in Europe and set yourself up as the great lady of the place."

"You know I am going to bespeak a flat out there," Florence broke in, "with which I can do as I please."

"That sounds naughty," Kendall said.

"I may make it a home for poor girls where they can go for a bit of air and sunshine," Florence went on.

"First rate!" Rothwell exclaimed, turning to Florence. "It's an excellent idea. You must tell me about it some day."

Susan was quick to notice Florence's pleasure in this; and working on an idea that at this moment sprung fully formed into her head, she said, "Yes;

it will be capital for you, Hubert, to become interested in Mrs. Wainwright's pet scheme for the development of her brother's property."

The thing that had popped into Susan's head so suddenly was to take a more definite form later in the evening when Max was presiding at the Victrola to give Miss Anderton and Delane an opportunity to "foxtrot" in a cleared space of the apartment; Florence and Rothwell were left to themselves on the window seat in a little alcove which looked out over the river, with its straight rows of lights like diamonds on long chains engirdling the city. They talked there quietly, each half-turned to the brilliant expanse beneath them, glittering with a myriad jewels like fine thoughts crystallized, reflecting the tone of the city that lay on the edge of the waters. Rothwell's high forehead and straight nose carried out the effect of a fineness quite above the ordinary; and as he sat slightly turned toward Florence, who was leaning back against the heavy blue hangings that framed this picture, there was pronouncedly the note of an intimate relation; of something, up to now casual, taking a definite form of understanding.

"It has an intellectual beauty," and "Even the houses in this district seem not to have been built, but to have grown," were chance remarks which Susan overheard as she passed by to the tune of the latest ragtime. Florence and her companion were talking of Boston, and Susan realized the ready response of Hubert to Florence's appreciation of the city. So her idea grew.

Here lay a possible solution of what had been so long for her a difficult problem. From the time of meeting Rothwell in England at the house of a friend, there had been a mad infatuation on his part. Susan at first had seen it in the light of many other experiences of the kind when young men—and by that we do not infer the too young man, but in the neighborhood of thirty, which happened to be Rothwell's age—had paid their marked devotions to her, fascinated by her worldliness and the easy accessibility of a rather masculine point of view; all of which had passed off as soon as she had removed herself to other environments. But Rothwell had literally pursued her, first by letters in which he warmly expressed his attitude and the chasm which her departure had caused in his life. Then by a flying trip to Paris in the autumn, when she had ensconced herself again in her old quarters. Here there had been no getting away from the fact that he was in love with her. He was useful at that particular time as an escort to various entertainments of one sort or another and was immediately liked by her friends; as he always was liked everywhere, in circles of the most varying character. He possessed the chameleon-like personality which dangerously takes on too easily the color of widely divergent types.

Susan through it all—for Rothwell stayed on in Paris until December—had been untouched by anything approaching a real affection for the man, or, as he seemed to her, the boy. She liked him im-

mensely, but never having been in love and loathing the idea of marriage, it was rather late for her to succumb to the grand passion. She knew, moreover, that his feeling for her was purely a mental one. She always had appealed to a certain type of sensitive man from the point of view of the intellect. If Hubert would but analyze his attitude, she believed firmly it would prove to be distinctly removed from anything sentimental, and she told him so when he finally declared himself on the eve of his departure to London. She talked simply and to the mark, but nothing would convince him. Her statement that he had confused his heart and his head brought only ironic laughter from the young man; and he vowed that he would persist until he made her understand, made her love him as he loved her. She was distressed by the final scene and hoped the winter would present in his path some charming girl admirably adapted to him. This had all happened the last year of the war, as Rothwell had been invalided home with a bad heart. Then the next summer came around—the first summer after the Armistice—and in August Susan was at Molly Wethersly's. Much as she enjoyed Rothwell, intensely as she liked being with him, she almost wished he would not make his appearance at Cowes. He was, in fact, delayed, but arrived in time to have three glorious days of sailing on the Solent with Susan preëminent in the party. He was more assured than ever of his undying devotion and made Susan promise that she would write to him.

Later came the news from America that her uncle had died and that her already copious fortune was to be enlarged by a most substantial bequest. In the trail of this came the tidings that her presence was required in New York, owing to the efforts of other relatives to break the will on some ground of unsound mind,—this really reducing itself to a certain disrepute which Susan held in the family owing to her European proclivities. But there was no evading the necessity of her immediate appearance in New York. Moreover, it worked well into the situation that she should leave Paris for a time, as she never knew when Rothwell might descend upon her from London. Certainly New York was more remote from such chances; so the good lady packed herself off.

However, the unexpected had happened; and Rothwell was in America. Before his arrival there had been an interchange of letters at rather regular intervals and Susan had duly announced her residence with old friends in Boston. She had written to him regularly with a purpose, for she was beginning to feel sorry for the youth who held the possibilities of a life-long devotion to her. She had seen too much and been under the grind of too many events not to realize the value of such faith. She must accept it for all it was worth; and with the advantage of the intervening seas, she thought she committed no breach of her established attitude by being as kind to Rothwell as was possible. His wireless message which announced his arrival in

Boston had amazed her to the point of being for the moment swept off her feet. Of course, under the exigencies of the situation, there was nothing to do but go on being kind to him and, as Hubert would interpret it, being kinder and kinder.

Up to this evening, however, there had been no passage between the two such as had occurred in Paris. Susan was resolved to keep Hubert now and forever on the easy footing of a friend. She knew it would be hard, but if he would not come to see these terms as the only possible ones of their relation to each other, she must definitely give him up even as a friend,—however difficult it might be to make him comprehend. To-night, as she watched Florence with him, she conceived how easy it would be to bring this new situation to her aid in solving her problem, if he would only take a sufficient interest in her friend. She had known from the moment she noted the "look" in Florence's eyes when she met Rothwell that Florence was falling in love with him. All her mood of the past fortnight, in its animation and a certain new lightness of spirit, confirmed Susan in her first impression. How wonderful it would be, thought Susan, if Hubert in his turn should fall in love with Florence. She believed herself capable of achieving a good deal toward this end. There was no time to be lost; and stopping breathless before the group in the window, she said it was their turn to "take the floor," there being floor really for only one couple at a time.

Rothwell arose as Susan crossed over to Delane,

who had taken possession of the talking machine.

"Put on a waltz," she said.

Without a word Florence rose as the music started. By some happy chance it was the "Fledermaus," a waltz she particularly loved. She stood a moment, looking at Rothwell and smiling; and then went swinging off with him. He danced divinely. Suddenly she seemed to feel that she was not herself; that is, not the person she had known herself to be the past few years. It was as though her later experiences had dropped from her and she was as she used to be, carelessly free of life in any of its larger moods. In the room filled with the more or less ornate trappings of Europe—brocades, altarpieces, dim, shaded lamps, and luxurious color of soft hangings—she got the impression of being in some other land, some place filled with the memories of things which she had long considered lost to her forever. For the time she seemed to forget all that had happened since her old dancing days. All the changes she had been through vanished, and she was filled only with the sense of this tall, straight man before her, who held her so firmly and guided her so easily around the various obstacles of chairs and tables. The close contact with him made her glow with a certain exhilaration. He said nothing; but when the music stopped, he requested that the record be played again, and Florence was caught up in that merry whirl of melody which corresponded so wonderfully to her own enjoyment of the thing.

Then there was another dance. The table in the dining room was moved, and Susan and Max took possession of the floor in there. Delane, as manipulator of the music, stood intent on his business, scarcely taking his eyes from the perusal of records and the changing of needles in the machine. He was very serious, occasionally glancing up at Florence as she and her partner passed near him. His face had an odd expression; but Florence, although she could not help noticing it, little realized any distinct meaning which it held. Susan, from the other room, was able to look out upon Delane and saw at once that he had been long enough out of the picture. His mood and manner denoted for her his displeasure in something.

"Come, Delane," she said, moving into the larger room, "you must dance again. I will not vouch for you as Mrs. Wainwright's next partner, for you really dance abominably,"—Delane knew he did and laughed,—"but you will do for me."

However, there had been enough dancing. Some one suggested a pause for liquid refreshment. This agreed admirably with the desire of the little group. The last bottle of gin was opened, and Susan procured ginger ale and sandwiches.

"Do you know," Delane began, "that we ought to have these little parties regularly. We could meet around at our different houses but always keep to the same crowd. Just us five, you see."

Florence loathed the idea the moment she heard of "meeting around." All in the best suburban man-

ner, she thought. Who would send a broadside into this new scheme? She did not like to, as it was hardly her affair at all. Surely Susan would come to the rescue in her best style.

"Don't you think, though," Susan replied to Delane's suggestion, "that this sort of thing is better done casually and when the spirit moves than by any arrangement of definite meetings?"

"Probably," Delane said, apparently convinced that anything Susan might say would be right.

After the dance with Rothwell, Florence was quite ready to go home. She was filled with the sense of things happily managed if only she should not be submitted to more of Delane's companionship. It appeared to her suddenly that she must—that it was her duty—to take Rothwell in hand and place him more securely in the proper Boston set than would be possible if he should stick fast to this small, but for him, amusing circle of Susan's. He was such a splendid type; Florence liked him so much that she felt it would be a loss, not only to the gentleman himself but to certain charming people he might meet, if he were allowed to complete his sojourn in the city without knowing her particular friends. This was uppermost in her mind as she said goodnight and started home with her brother. Delane and Rothwell went off together up Beacon Hill.

Susan waved them all good-by from the top of the stairway outside her door; and then, retreating to her snug little sitting room, she looked out over the river to the confused twinkling of the lights. Much was

ahead of her to do; but the happy relationship which seemed to have sprung up between Florence and Rothwell was not so perplexing to her as what might lie in the heavy expression of Delane's face as he stood, manipulator of the music, while her two friends danced. Could she so manage it that he would be manipulator of the music to the end; or would he too wish to dance?

CHAPTER VIII

During the Christmas season Florence saw a good deal of Hubert. They went together on a number of shopping excursions, although the absurdly high price of things and their wretched quality made the giving of Christmas presents, as Florence remarked, rather a stupid performance for a person of taste. Picking up one day in a shop an imitation woolen scarf marked \$14.50, she said, "Only an idiot would be taken in by such things, and I do not choose to be the idiot. Let's go and have tea." That was the way their expeditions usually ended, and they would either drop into a hotel or return to Marlborough Street and get their tea at home, when Susan was very likely to appear on the scene.

Hubert also helped Florence arrange the Christmas tree at her settlement house and looked in on the happy throng on the afternoon of the great day, when the mere presence of Mrs. Wainwright seemed to add as much brightness to the occasion as the flaming little candles amid the green and sparkling decorations. Then came the holidays, and Florence took Rothwell to a number of parties, especially to one very elaborate ball which followed the "coming out" into society of some one or other. Susan and Max appeared at this affair also, although they were somewhat lesser lights to Florence and her good-looking friend. Every one was glad to see Mrs.

Wainwright again going about with her old "crowd," and the groups of friends that constantly came up to greet her almost made the party a "coming back" for her quite as brilliant as the "coming out" of the young lady whose mother was hostess.

Florence decided that Hubert was quite the most delightful companion she had had in many a day; and the young man himself was warm in his praises of Mrs. Wainwright, admitting to Susan that he did not know when he had liked any one so well and hoped that Miss Anderton would not think that he was deserting her. At this Susan was tremendously amused, saying that the very thing that pleased her best was to see him taking an interest in some one other than herself.

"You know I am an old lady," she said.

"I know you are a trump," Rothwell retorted, "and to talk of your age is absurd."

But the situation, so far as Susan was concerned, had been cleared soon after Christmas by the fact that that lady had spent most of her time in New York. The case of her uncle's will was well under way, and her presence was required on the scene of action. During Lent she went to the Virginia Hot Springs to recuperate from the worry incident to the litigation over the will case. She positively had refused Hubert permission to go with her; and, as a matter of fact, he was having such a good time in Boston that he had little desire to leave town. It was characteristic of Miss Anderton's way of doing things that, having installed herself in the Boston

flat, she should pass this over during her absence to her English friend. Here Rothwell had established himself for the winter. It also worked quite into Susan's scheme that the business matters in New York should be made as much of as possible and lengthened out perhaps more than was really necessary in order that the Boston setting should be clear for Hubert and Florence. She placed great faith in Florence's no uncertain infatuation for Hubert, which would have a free stage only if she herself were out of the way. Delane, happily for Florence, had been quite out of this picture during the winter; as he had been too busy with business matters to have much time for seeing her, and then had gone for a month to Florida to accompany his mother and father to their winter place there. It was a little hard on Max, Florence thought, to have the whole of Greenvale affairs thrust on his shoulders at the very time when things were going at a very rapid rate in the development of the land; but Max was too flushed with success to grumble, and Florence realized it was none of her business how much responsibility Delane put upon her brother.

One morning in April, soon after her return from Virginia, Susan dropped in to see Florence and tell her about the result of her New York affairs. The matter of the will was to be carried into higher courts, as is invariably the way in such things; and it would be some time before she would know just what windfall was coming to her from her uncle's estate. What was really uppermost in Susan's

mind this morning, however, was to feel the ground as to just how far Hubert and Florence had progressed in their relation to each other. During the few days since her return she had been able to find out very little of what actually had happened in her absence, beyond the enthusiastic and rather boyish account which Hubert gave of some of the entertainments at which he had been present during the Boston season. That Florence had been more than kind to him was apparent in every connection of which he spoke. But these occasions of kindness were of the general sort, in crowds and in large affairs, which carried for Susan no hint or suggestion of any more intimate relation between himself and Mrs. Wainwright than had existed before she went away.

As she came this morning into the upstairs sitting room of the Marlborough Street house, where the sun was streaming in, making long lines of vibrating light across the violet-blue rug, and saw Florence in a pink gown against a background of yellow flowers, she felt more than ever the peculiar appropriateness of all this—the scene and Florence so completely within it—to Hubert and what he might gloriously make of it. The refinement and charm of it was a picture to Susan of what she had always felt was the soul of Rothwell. His English home, which she knew had been one of fine traditions, could not so have fitted the young man as this Boston setting. Here he would be perfectly placed. It was, too, a visualization of what the essence of the Boston man-

ner stood for in contrast to the English one. It was as though the top of the New England achievement had shed through the past decade much of the old English materialism, emerging in the Kendalls and all their kind in a finer and more rarified atmosphere, losing nothing of comfort in the process but adding to it an immeasurable degree of mentality and spirituality.

"You are like a spring flower this morning, my dear," Susan said, as she sat down.

"I am sure I don't feel like one," Florence replied.

She had a newspaper on her lap, which she handed to her friend.

"I suppose you haven't seen this item about Delane's motor running down a girl last night," she added.

"I never read the local news," Susan returned. "I skip it all. The local news in our papers consists mainly of a detailed account of accidents and murders in the slums with the portrait of some one's mother, or the face of a girl whom one never would have seen, even if she had not been murdered or run over. But, really, what has happened that seems to lay you so low?"

"Merely, according to your standpoint, that Delane's car knocked down a girl last night and quite seriously injured her. Of course, the only particulars given in the newspaper are that Delane is a prominent young business man behind the Greenvale venture and that his car is a high-powered Packard limousine. It is too disgusting—as though

the recklessness of fast driving at night and the injuries to the girl are not the most important thing. Max called me up from the office before I had finished breakfast to ask if I would go to the City Hospital with Delane to see his victim."

At this Susan looked up quickly. "You make him rather a beast, don't you?" she asked.

"Of course I had to go," Florence went on, without giving heed. "As Max said, it seemed rather in my line, especially as the accident happened in the district where I work. Delane called for me, and I got the particulars of the thing on the way. Nora Delane was being rushed home from the theater with four or five friends when they ran down a girl crossing the street. The curious part is that this girl turns out to be the pal of Gracie Linton about whom I told you. Gracie was at the hospital with her friend, apparently having spent the night at her bedside. She looked upon me as a sort of angel dropped down from heaven; and I really think my appearance caused her more surprise than the accident to Tommy."

"Tommy?" Susan inquired.

"Yes; that's the other girl's name."

"Is she badly hurt?"

"Leg broken and severe shaking up," Florence replied. "She will pull through all right; but to me the extraordinary thing is the calm and matter-of-fact way in which Delane views the matter. He says his lawyer will fix it so that no charge of

manslaughter can be entered against his chauffeur; and he gave me some money to buy things for the girl. It is so annoying! He will wash his hands of the affair by distributing a few dollars. As though Tommy's leg isn't as important as that of any other girl. I can just fancy how he would have behaved if the thing had happened to some one living over here in the Back Bay. In that case, sister Nora would have appeared in her yellow furs in great style. As it is she hasn't shown up at all. Delane says she is in a state of nerves due to the excitement of the accident."

"Which is her natural state," Susan laughed. "But aren't you rather hard on them?"

"They are all hard themselves," Florence returned. "I told Delane that here was a chance for him to do something splendid; and he scarcely took me in. He thought I meant something in the matter of money,—doctor's fees and all that. That is as far as he can see his responsibility."

All this might have interested Susan at some other time; but just now she had other things in mind.

"I am sure Hubert would do something fine in such a case," she ventured.

"I know he would," Florence replied with conviction. "He would be all there in any situation."

Susan said nothing to this for a moment; but finally, "He thinks you are splendid."

Florence looked up quickly and rather "took in" Miss Anderton, as if wondering if Hubert really had said that, and if he had said it, just how much he

meant by it. The moment of silence was broken by Susan, who remarked that Florence had undoubtedly had a trying morning and that she would take herself off straightway.

Florence, who was going back to the hospital that afternoon to see Tommy, wished that Rothwell might go with her. She thought she would call him up on the telephone, yet felt a slight awkwardness in always taking the initiative in their plans together. Through the winter it nearly always had been her arrangements for him that had thrown them with each other; and with her growing consciousness of her interest in him, she realized that it was beginning to be the old story of the woman pursuing the man. If the fascination he held for her had been a thing of minor importance, she would have felt perfectly all right to try to get hold of him for any and all occasions. However, this visit to the hospital was really rather a tiresome business; she thought it better to leave Hubert out of the matter.

As she walked through the South End later in the day and saw the dome of the hospital, quite French in its way, at the end of a long vista of trees, she felt the peculiar charm of what had thus far been her relationship to the Englishman. This bit of old Boston was of particular charm, and remote from the often confused obtrusiveness of the more modern parts of town. To Florence, Rothwell was in some way like this; he belonged not quite to the present. One could scarcely call him old-fashioned; and yet in his personality the emphasis seemed

always upon the charming things in life rather than upon the merely successful. She remembered a walk with him early in the winter when she had showed him the city, and his keen appreciation of the characteristics of the different districts they wandered through. How many points of individuality Boston really had. There were more neighborhoods and localities, all differing totally from one another, than she could remember in any American city. Most large towns had an expression that went through the whole community; but here the aspect was different in every section. There were the West End red brick houses, which Rothwell noted as more English than modern London; the Back Bay, with a certain blandness like a grand old lady looking remotely through her *lorgnon*. The North End, with its narrow ways, sudden corners, and diverting vistas, Rothwell had wished to paint; while at the other end of town in the Fenway, in the array of schools and scientific institutions, museums and hospitals, they both had realized the effect of culture laid on thick. Here in the South End a rather frayed Victorianism pervaded the scene until one seemed to catch the very smell of horsehair furniture.

Yes; Florence wished Hubert were with her. Especially, when at the end of the quiet square in front of the hospital she saw Delane's car. In its glistening newness and bright blue coat of paint there was something distinctly in contrast to the dinginess of the neighborhood. She wondered why Delane had come again to see Tommy that day;

surely his business was too important to permit him to make such frequent visits to a poor, unknown girl who had been injured by his motor. When she got inside and went down the long Accident Ward, she could see his broad shoulders and head by the bed of Tommy. Gracie was sitting there, and Delane standing above, smiling down at the two girls; but especially, as Florence noted as she came nearer, smiling at Gracie. There appeared to be much laughter and the best sort of understanding between the persons of the little group, none of whom was aware of the presence of Mrs. Wainwright until she was directly upon them.

Delane at once looked up, and shaking hands with her, remarked that Tommy was indeed fortunate in having two friends who were so attentive to her.

"It's worth being run over, isn't it," Gracie said, "when you find two pals like these."

Tommy smiled back faintly and put out her hand, which Florence took and held several moments. A nurse appearing just then, Florence asked how soon Tommy would be able to leave the hospital; she was told probably at the end of three or four weeks.

Thereupon Delane said, "First rate; I will come to see you often and you just let Mrs. Wainwright know if there is anything I can do for you."

"You are certainly very kind, sir," Tommy said, as Delane started to go.

"Don't mention it," he answered. Then, turning

to Florence, he asked if he might be allowed to take her home. He was going to see the head nurse about certain things and would come back for her in ten minutes.

Gracie was leaving just then and walked away with Delane. As Florence saw them going down the ward, there was something in the situation which was not altogether pleasant to her. She could not have said just what it was; but the fact that Delane had come twice to the hospital in one day and seemed on such a friendly footing with both Tommy and Gracie denoted for her something more than the casual interest which up to now he had shown in the injuries to the girl.

Florence sat and talked with Tommy, who was really very weak. As she lay there, pale and fragile, her dark hair done loosely down her back and looking very soft against the whiteness of the pillow, Florence felt a great pity for her. She seemed so different now, with all the paint and powder and shoddy clothes removed; and was so natural, so like a great many other girls. And even her manner was different, with the superficial coarseness quite gone. If, when she recovered, she could be taken away in just this condition,—away from her old life, dressed in new clothes and never see or come in contact with any of her old associations, what might not be done, thought Florence, in helping this girl to become a normal, healthy human being. It was too soon yet to say anything to Gracie about the plan she had in mind for her in connection with

Greenvale; but certainly it would bear thinking of. More especially now that she had seen Tommy in this condition, the possibilities of a complete renewal of her personality seemed more feasible than ever. Besides, there was something very sweet in Gracie's devotion to her pal. Here in the hospital the two girls appeared entirely natural and quite capable of a better life than the one they had been leading. So much might be accomplished with the two of them, while with one it would be more difficult; for each could help and support the other in any attempt along the lines which Florence contemplated.

But here was Delane again; and a bell, ringing at one end of the room, announced that the visitors must go.

"Well," said Delane, on the way back to Marlborough Street, "it certainly has come out better than we could have expected."

"How do you mean?" Florence asked.

"Oh, that her injuries aren't any worse. Sometimes you get into awful scrapes in these things."

"I should think quite likely," Florence interrupted.

"In South Boston once," he went on, "I came near getting into a mess about a child my car hit. The child's father tried to make it hot for me; but fortunately I had friends at City Hall, and they settled the thing devilish quick."

"And what became of the child?" Florence inquired.

"Oh, the kid got well, I suppose. It was in the

hospital some time, but children's bones don't take long to mend."

"Didn't you ever find out about it?"

"No; I don't have the time to follow up these things. I gave the father five hundred dollars. That seems big, but it really was not much, considering what I might have had to pay if the matter had come into court."

The hardness of Delane was becoming more and more apparent to Florence. She had not cared for him from the first; but she had tried to see only his best side on account of her brother's relation to him. Susan had taken a rather glowing view of the possibilities in him. Florence could not see them.

After a rather long silence he said suddenly, "Come, Mrs. Wainwright, stay out to dinner with me somewhere. You don't have to get back to your brother. Let's go on a little spree together."

"I am afraid I am not in the mood for a lark," Florence replied. "Besides," she added, "I am expecting Miss Anderton to dinner."

She knew it was unkind in her not to ask him to the house also; but she really did not want him. She could not make him out. Was he merely trying to be nice to her, to play up to the situation on account of Max; or was he taking something of an interest in her?

"You know," he said, "you are the sort of person, Mrs. Wainwright, that it does a fellow like me a lot of good to know. I have been rather wild in

my time, and I suppose I am still, in a way, under the surface; but I think knowing some one like you would help a great deal. Of course, Nora is all right; she's one fine girl. I hope you like Nora. But she has her own interests, and goes about with her own set, and isn't very much at home. There really is not any one for me to be especially fond of.'

Right here it seemed high time to turn the conversation. Florence had no intention of being Delane's guardian angel or the saving grace of his life. The arrival home, however, made any move on her part unnecessary.

As she said good-by, thanking him for bringing her back, he held her hand a moment, pressing it a little too warmly. There was an awkward pause until Florence drew away quickly and disappeared into the house. As she had expected, Susan was there and came into the hall to greet her. When Florence told her that on the way home Delane had been rather personal in his remarks, that lady merely said, "I think he has a 'crush' on you, my dear."

"What a ridiculous idea," Florence exclaimed, as she hurried upstairs to dress for dinner.

For Susan, however, there was nothing ridiculous in it; especially in view of what she had suspected on several former occasions. She wondered how long it would take her friend to discover Delane's state of mind. She must be more watchful than ever, not only on Florence's account but because of Hubert. Where was he, anyway, Susan wondered; why hadn't he been on the scene to-night?

CHAPTER IX

Certainly, if Delane had any serious intentions concerning Florence, it would be rather an obstacle to what Susan might plan for Hubert. Delane was too important in the scheme of things to be turned aside casually from his purposes. He was the sort that must be dealt with. The situation, as Susan now saw it, had many angles and corners for them all. Whether she would try to turn the first corner in order that she might find out more clearly Delane's feelings in the matter was what came up for her immediate decision. No move, however, on her part was necessary, as Delane himself appeared a few nights later at her flat.

As he sat by an open window where a fresh breeze blew in from the river, slightly ruffling his hair, he showed undoubtedly to the best advantage. Susan had never realized before the full strength of his features. He was a type that is seen to the best in some effect of half lights and shadow, and not in the brilliant glare of a drawing-room or against a background incongruous to his casual manners.

"You're a funny sort," Susan remarked, after a pause which had seemed interminable.

"How do you mean?" Delane asked in a listless tone of voice.

"Why," she answered, "you have sat there fully five minutes, completely oblivious of my presence."

"Excuse me," Delane was quick to reply; "but I was thinking."

"What were you thinking about,—Greenvale?"

"Not especially. Why is it, I wonder, that people always suppose I am thinking about Greenvale. Certainly I am a human being and have a mind for something besides my work."

"Of course," Susan said. "But you always give the impression of being frightfully absorbed,—absorbed as you are now in the river and the view."

"I wasn't thinking of the river."

"Of me perhaps."

"You are very flattering to yourself."

"One has to be sometimes," Susan went on.

"Has any one failed you?" Delane asked with sudden interest.

"Certainly not; I was only teasing you."

There was another pause in which he continued to gaze out of the window, when Susan, seizing the opportune moment, flung out, "I think you are in love."

Delane turned quickly to her, but said nothing.

"If you are like the rest of the men I know," Susan remarked, "you surely have your little love affairs."

"I don't think there is any such thing as a little love affair," he answered slowly.

"A big one then."

"The big ones people don't talk about."

Susan was beginning to see that she would not get very far in finding out his present state of mind. After a moment she continued, "Mrs. Wainwright told me of your mishap the other night."

"That was rather bad," he replied. "It was good of Mrs. Wainwright, though, to go to the hospital to see the girl. She turned out to be somebody she knew. I think she has been over again to-day to take some things. It is mighty kind of her, I am sure."

"Florence is always like that," Susan said.

"Yes; but what a cool sort of person she is, after all."

"How do you mean?"

"Perhaps I should say cold," Delane went on; "and yet that is not exactly my idea of her."

"Remote would hit it nearer," Susan interrupted.

"Yes, 'remote'; that's the word. She is so charming and good and all that; but she never seems to really want you to know her—to admit you to her friendship. I can't quite understand her."

"Perhaps that is because you don't really know her."

"I would like to know her,—to know her awfully well."

"In what way?" Susan inquired as casually as possible, but thinking that something might be forthcoming now which would give her a firmer grasp of the situation.

"To be her friend," was all that Delane said in reply.

"But you are her friend, I am sure," Susan returned.

"Perhaps, to a certain extent."

"You see," she pursued, "Florence is too absorbed in her work to feel much interest in seeking intimate friendships. To her, her work is everything, and what we choose to call her remoteness is merely her concentration in that work. I have noticed the difference since my return from Europe. We used to be so much together, and I seemed a part of her life. Now, although I am with her a great deal, it is as if I were only an incident among her many other activities.

Here Susan saw her advantage by placing Florence in Delane's conception quite out of the sphere of his life. If she could only make him feel that Mrs. Wainwright could have no possible interest in him beyond his connection with Greenvale and Max, it might be the means of turning the corner of his infatuation.

"Yes," she was saying, "I am not surprised that you have noticed this characteristic in my friend. We all feel it. Florence is such a dear, but sometimes we wish that we could get a little nearer to her."

"I don't see why the slum work appeals to her so much," Delane interposed.

"Oh, that is just what I mean," Susan said. "Her work is her life. She has given herself to it completely, just as she gave herself to Jack Wainwright. I think it is really because she loved her

husband so much that it would be impossible for any one ever to take his place."

"You think she will never marry again?"

"I should consider it extremely doubtful."

"But isn't she rather fond of Rothwell?" Delane asked.

"Hubert, my dear fellow, is my friend. He came over from England to see me. Whatever made you imagine there was anything between him and Florence?"

"Oh, simply," Delane remarked, "because I think they were together a good deal last winter. At least, Max said they were. I never go around in their crowd, so I suppose I don't really know very much about it."

There was something so taken for granted in the way Delane constantly put himself out of Florence's set that Susan felt sorry for him. His intimate connection with Max in business and his remoteness from Kendall's social life was distinctly annoying to her. It was the sort of thing, she knew, that happened frequently in the great American democracy; but the old families that could stoop to the millions of the self-made man she would like to see mingle a little more with the maker of those millions. Delane seemed to her an eligible person if a few exterior roughnesses were polished down a bit; and even now, since first meeting him six months before, she could see a great difference. His manner of dressing was less obtrusive, and he talked very well when he was thoroughly interested

in a subject. However, for her present occasion she could not let the opportunity fail her of agreeing with him as to whatever coldness he felt in Florence that he might continue to see himself on the outside of that connection.

"Your Kendalls and the rest of their sort," Susan began again, "are a fetish; and adoring generations of people just beyond the pale have made them believe they are the elect of the Lord. I won't deny that they are a pretty fine lot,—about as good all around as one would wish to see; but in these days when hero worship is distinctly mid-Victorian, one would enjoy the spectacle of a few pedestals knocked down. The difficulty is, though, that we have only money bags to take their place."

"You talk confoundedly well, Miss Anderton," Delane said, laughing; "but I don't always follow you."

"I wish you would call me Susan," that lady remarked. "Just feel that I am your real friend; and that you will find me 'all there' in any situation."

"You're all right, Susan dear," Delane responded heartily, with the faintest trace of an Irish brogue, "and Jim Delane knows which side his bread is buttered on."

They were both laughing at their sudden burst of enthusiasm for each other when the doorbell rang, and Rothwell appeared on the scene.

"I am very fortunate to-night," Susan said, as she greeted him. "It is not often that I have two men drop in unexpectedly this way. It is first rate.

Sit down, both of you, and I will get out my last bottle of Scotch."

Whether or not the drink which Susan produced had the tendency to make Delane silent and Rothwell voluble, it would be hard to say; but at any rate, the former young gentleman became remarkably quiet and soon after made his departure; while Hubert, although seeing that Susan wished to write some letters, insisted that she should sit down and talk with him, as he had much to say.

"In fact," he began, "I have come to propose for—shall I say the eleventh time, my dear Susan?"

"You had better make it an even dozen," she replied, "as I have long since lost the count."

"But this is the real thing," Hubert persisted.

"What about the time in Paris?" Susan inquired. "Certainly that was the real thing, and surely I was final in my answer."

"No answer can be final until you accept me."

"Then I fear our story must remain unfinished."

"But why should it be unfinished," Rothwell exclaimed, getting up and standing above Miss Anderson, who had sat down by her desk. "You know how well we get on together; you know exactly my feelings toward you. Why won't you marry me?"

"Simply," Susan said, "because I don't wish to marry. Besides, I am far too old for you; and as an incident of perhaps first importance, I am not in love with you."

"That doesn't count at all," Hubert interrupted.

"As I told you before, it is no reason with me."

"Now really, my dear boy," Susan went on, taking Hubert's hand, "I can't go through scenes like this with you once a year or every six months. It is too harrowing. You know I have nerves, although people won't attribute them to me. I want to see you married, and I want to see you happy; but I don't wish to see you married to myself. Why won't you look about a bit? Why can't you realize that I am out of the question; that I am no longer in the running?"

"That is just what I won't admit. You will always be in the running for me."

"Quite all right; so far it suits me exactly," she continued. "I always wish to be your friend, and I should miss you awfully if for any reason I could not see you now and then."

Hubert stood a moment, looking out of the window, not knowing whether he was utterly miserable on account of what Susan had said, or rather pleased that the situation was at last clear. He felt that perhaps now he had shot his last arrow; and there is always a certain feeling of relief when that has been done.

Rothwell thought that he never had fooled himself as to his attitude toward Susan. He knew that he loved her, liked her better than any woman he had ever known; yet the fact of their difference in age put whatever there was of physical attraction in abeyance to the higher plane of true friendship. Susan realized much more clearly than he did that

this was the ground on which he approached her. That they should always remain on this firm footing of comradeship was what she wished. However, if Hubert were to insist upon marriage and propose to her annually, she must definitely break with him. This would not be easy unless some one could be found to claim his attention and in some way take her place.

"Hubert," she said at last, "it would be absurd for us to marry. We both have lots of money and a very strong notion of our personal freedom. Why don't you find a girl of your own age who would be really helped by becoming your wife?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" Rothwell exclaimed. "Do you imagine that I am considering marriage from the mercenary end and its relation to other people? I am thinking of myself and what I want in the matter."

"As men usually do," Susan interrupted. Then she went on, "I was thinking of some person like Florence Wainwright. You need not be passionately in love with her," she hastened to add, as she saw a movement on the part of her friend to expostulate. "You are not even that with me. But you could make her very happy. It is ridiculous to say that you wouldn't be happy yourself wedded to such a fine woman. Fancy what an annoying person I should be with all my flitting about and old-maid habits. You never could endure it for long. But Florence is the born wife; she is in her element in the married state. You should have known her

years ago in Paris with Jack. She made his home perfectly delightful, and she would do it again for the man she was fond of. You know, sometimes it is better to be loved than to love. Of course a man never realizes that until it is too late. Now promise that you will no longer consider me in a romantic light. Take off your rose-colored spectacles; I don't look well through them."

"And you are sending me back to England with this answer?" Hubert asked.

"Certainly I am not sending you back to England," she said hastily. "I wish you to stay right here. You can be a great help to Florence in her ideas for Greenvale; and I know it is the sort of thing which will interest you."

"I am not going to have any illusions about her."

"Let her have the illusions; you needn't trouble yourself on that score."

"For whatever reason I stay in America, it will really be because I like being near you."

"There you go again," Susan ejaculated. "What did I tell you?"

"That you will be my friend," Hubert said. "Rather cold comfort in my opinion; but isn't that all I am able to ask?"

"By the way," Susan resumed; "you can prove your friendship by doing something for me now. Delane, you know, is rather keen on Florence."

"How amusing," Rothwell laughed.

"Scarcely that. He is very interested in her and likely to become something of an annoyance, if I

read him right. He came here to-night to talk with me about her."

"And not to make love to you? I should say that he would get on much better with you than with your friend." After a moment he asked, "Does she know Delane's attitude?"

"She must realize that he is decidedly interested in her; but from the first she has never liked him."

"I can understand that," Hubert remarked. "But in that case I should think the situation would take care of itself."

"Of course you would," Susan continued, "because you are a man, and then you English are so adorably calm."

"Leaving all the English business out of the question, will you kindly tell me what I am to do?"

"Merely devote yourself to Florence as much as you feel that it becomes you to do."

"And keep a clear conscience," he said, laughing.

"Yes; above all, keep a clear conscience," she answered, a little quizzically.

"But that is just what I am doing. I have been about a lot with Mrs. Wainwright this winter."

"Oh, yes, of course," Susan replied. "But put more 'punch' into it, as the Americans say."

"Won't Mrs. Wainwright misunderstand?" Rothwell asked. "Won't she think that I am paying her definite attention?"

"What if she does?"

"What if she does! I don't wish to mislead the poor lady."

"You certainly have had no scruples about misleading me," Susan said. "How fortunate that I was not younger. I can see how I would have been swept off my feet by your persistence. Now you are afraid of carrying Florence by storm. Oh, the conceit of men."

"Don't laugh at me," Rothwell expostulated. "I only want to make sure where I stand."

• "And like all your class, you don't wish to leap before you look."

"But just what is it you ask me to do?" he went on.

"To be quite frank," Susan said, "I would like to feel there is some one taking a definite interest in Florence to protect her from Delane's attentions."

"A sort of bodyguard in the person of an eligible young man, eh?"

"Exactly that; and no one could be better than you, because Florence likes you."

"I am aware of that," Hubert said, "and that is just where the danger lies. A spark in such cases is as good as a fire."

"But you may be very sure," Susan continued, "that you need have no fear of compromising yourself. The Kendalls are not that sort."

"I was only thinking of Mrs. Wainwright's feelings in the matter."

"If you think only of that, then do what I say. Make yourself her friend and pal, as it were, seeing to it that she has no time for Delane."

"I think you are seeing chimæras as far as Delane

is concerned," Hubert replied; "and certainly Florence is able to look out for herself in that quarter."

"Don't be too sure of anything; Delane is a very persistent person."

"I can see how he will dislike me most awfully."

"He probably does already," was Miss Anderton's answer to this.

"Very well," Rothwell at last said, as he started to go; "I will do what I can, and although I like Mrs. Wainwright very much—better than any one I have met over here—yet I feel no great enthusiasm in going into this thing in quite the manner you suggest."

"To hell with enthusiasm!" Susan exclaimed. "It is Florence's happiness I am thinking about."

CHAPTER X

In spite of Susan's well-laid plans in respect to Florence and Hubert, Delane stole a march on her by going straight from her house to the Kendalls'. Although he asked for both Max and Mrs. Wainwright, it was really the latter whom he wished to see. Florence, who desired to talk with him about Tommy and Gracie, was glad of this opportunity of getting his views on the subject.

He apologized for calling so late; and then the conversation wandered to matters relative to Greenvale and how soon it would actually be "running," as Delane chose to phrase it. This led to what was uppermost in Florence's mind,—that is, how soon she would be able to try her experiment of sending Gracie and Tommy—and perhaps later other girls—to Greenvale to live. Several times she had attempted to talk with Max about it, but with not much success. To him it was all preposterous, not only savoring of far-fetched Socialistic ideas but questionable as to the point of placing such girls in the new community.

"It sounds like a Bolshevik 'House of Rest,'" Max said one day, "and it certainly can be of no advantage to a respectable young suburb to have a bunch of wild girls dropped down upon it."

"Greenvale has no social reputation to live up to," Florence had said in reply. "I don't intend to form a colony of undesirables. I merely wish to send Tommy into the country to recuperate and to see what a new environment will do for both her and Gracie."

The practical side of an argument such as this had little effect upon Max. He could not understand why these girls should enter into Florence's concern any more than he could comprehend his sister's depression after a hard day's work in the slums. People like Gracie and Tommy were beyond his horizon; and the very idea of their having any connection with Greenvale was not only absurd but distinctly annoying to him. Perhaps it was this annoyance which had shown in his voice when he wound up the conversation with his sister by remarking that the subject did not interest him in the least, and that he would be very glad if Florence would clear her mind of such preposterous notions. This had told her quite plainly that nothing further could be done in that quarter. She thought, however, that Delane might be approachable.

While she would have hesitated to ask any favors of him, yet this matter of the girls was of such intense interest to her in relation with what she hoped to do that she felt she would be placing herself under no obligation in speaking to him about it. It was easy enough this evening to introduce the subject, as naturally Delane wanted to know how Tommy was getting on and how long she would

have to stay in the hospital. Then Florence mentioned taking her out to Greenvale when that place should begin to be settled. The social aspect of the thing did not enter into the question for Delane. He considered merely how it could be done; whether the girls would be boarded out, and who would look after them and see that they behaved themselves.

"I will see that they behave themselves," Florence said with enthusiasm. "All I need to know is whether I shall be able to get a place for them and how soon?"

"Of course," Delane replied, after a moment's reflection; "a number of houses are being built now. Then there is an apartment house on the edge of our land which was begun early in the spring, and I think must be nearly ready for occupancy."

"Why couldn't I rent a flat there and get the girls out as soon as Tommy is able to be moved from the hospital? It is perfectly clear that Max will not approve of this at all. I rely upon you to make him see it in the right light."

"You don't need any pull with your brother," Delane laughed, "to fix the girls up at Greenvale. Our houses are open to all—first come, first served." After a pause he added, "I think it is mighty fine of you to undertake this. I don't know that I ever met a more noble-hearted person than you are, and I am going to do all I can to help."

Florence felt that she was on thin ice again, and Delane was going to consider her rather too much in the front of the Greenvale scheme. Here would

lie her difficulty in whatever she would be able to accomplish with his aid.

"I merely want you to talk to Max," she said, "and tell him that I am determined to carry this thing through. He need not worry about the expense involved, so far as I am concerned, for Susan Anderton has been wonderful and has offered to pay the rent of a little flat."

"Susan is great, isn't she?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; I am glad you appreciate her."

"I certainly do. I have just been over to see her, but left a little sooner than I intended because her young man came in."

How amused, Florence thought, Susan would be at this mention of Rothwell as her young man.

Suddenly Delane said, "I suppose you see a lot of Mr. Rothwell."

"Yes, indeed," Florence answered. "My brother and I enjoy him very much."

"I wonder when he is going back to England."

Florence did not care to discuss Rothwell with Delane and made no reply to this beyond a casual "I don't know." There followed a pause, during which Delane sat looking at Florence in the rather intense manner which always had annoyed her. She turned the conversation to other things, keeping her visitor remote from personalities until he took his departure somewhat late in the evening.

The result, however, of the chat this night was that in less than a month the apartment house of which Delane had spoken was completed, and Flor-

ence and Susan were negotiating for one of the flats in it. Then Max was as nearly angry with his sister as he ever had been; he told her that she was attempting something wild and reckless, even going so far as to say that the experiment with the girls might land her in the police court, to which Mrs. Wainwright retorted that so long as it landed her and not them, she would have no reason to complain. But Max had little control over the situation. Susan took out the lease in her own name, and Florence went ahead with the preparation of the place.

Rothwell entered into Florence's scheme with great interest and came frequently to see her and talk with her about it. They went together to Greenvale and helped to install a certain Mrs. Potter in the flat. Mrs. Potter was the widow of an aged gardener who had worked years before for the Kendalls, when they had a country place outside Boston. She now went out sewing, and Florence often employed her and for several years had assumed a general oversight of her. She considered her an excellent person for the present situation, for in spite of being of the strictly New England type, she was not inhumanly rigid in her ideas. Florence told her quite frankly who the girls were and what she hoped to do for them. Mrs. Potter remarked that she would let the poor dears sew for her on the work she "took out" to do at home; that certainly would amuse them and, according to her theory, uplift them at the same time. She realized that they were to be allowed a certain amount of

freedom and must never for a moment suspect that Mrs. Wainwright was trying to "make them over." "They musn't know that we are moralizing them," she said. It was to be merely a matter of country air and quiet for the convalescence of Tommy,—Gracie being included on account of her friend.

"Yes," she went on, "it will be just like altering an old gown. The lace is shabby, like these girls' lives; but we rip it off, put on something fresh and bright, just as I shall instill right ideas into their minds, and all is as good as new."

Whether the transformation would be as rapid as Mrs. Potter imagined was somewhat doubtful to Rothwell, who was much amused by the good lady.

"If she does too much ripping," he said to Florence, "there will be nothing left of her charges. And do caution her not to read the Proverbs out loud, or the story of Mary Magdalen."

Both he and Susan thought Florence had found an excellent person in Mrs. Potter. Susan had been out to the apartment several times to arrange certain matters of furnishings which she had most generously undertaken. During all this time Max preserved a stubborn silence, occasionally asking his sister what she expected would happen when the girls began to weary of Greenvale.

"Just at present," Florence had answered, "there is no one in Greenvale for them to go wrong with, even if they are bored. As for coming into town in the evening, that is the one thing Tommy is not able to do; and Gracie has agreed to watch out

after her friend and stay with her. She has already told me that she is so thankful Tommy is alive and so grateful to me for sending her into the country that she will do anything I say."

"All very well," Max would say to explanations of this sort; "but you fail to realize the difficulties of the situation."

"There isn't going to be any situation," Florence replied, "not if I know it."

"That is just the trouble," her brother laughed, "of course you won't know it."

The day the girls were to go into their new quarters Florence took Gracie out on a shopping expedition to buy a few necessities in the way of clothing, as the small trunk at her lodgings had disclosed a sad deficiency in this line. About noon-time they joined Tommy at the hospital, and found her dressed and ready for the trip to Greenvale, but looking very frail after so many weeks in bed. Gracie, through Mrs. Wainwright's kindness, had bought her friend a small silver-topped tube of smelling salts, this apparently being to her mind the symbol of their going to live like ladies out of town.

Delane picked them all up in his car, Florence delaying the departure a bit until she had received a telephone message from Rothwell saying that he would not appear on the scene. She could quite get his point that two men arriving at the flat with the girls might start things in rather a high key, although he had half promised to be pres-

ent on "moving day," as he styled this occasion. So they went on without him and arrived at Mrs. Potter's to find that good woman hovering about the kitchen, preparing luncheon. The girls were so dazed by the bright aspect of the apartment, the new furniture, the pretty curtains, and above all by the bowl of flowers in the middle of the dining-room table, that for a moment they were speechless.

"And we are really to live here?" Tommy at last exclaimed.

"Of course," Florence replied; "you are to board with Mrs. Potter, and this is to be your home until you get good and strong and forget that you ever had a broken leg."

"And to think this nice feller's car did the trick," Gracie said, smiling at Delane.

"Didn't I always say it was one of them blessings in disguise?" Tommy asked, also beaming upon the gentleman of the party. "Oh, look at the Victrola; ain't it wonderful! I had one once on the installment plan but had to send it back because I didn't pay up prompt enough."

Susan Anderton, in furnishing the apartment, had seen to it that nothing was lacking to make it attractive. From the gay-colored sofa pillows and the Victrola in the living room to the pretty china and glassware of the dining room, all was quite cosey and homelike. When the girls saw their bedrooms—one done in pink and the other in blue—their delight was beyond expression. Gracie

chose the pink room, as that had always been her color she said; while Tommy unpacked her suitcase in the blue room. "More restful for an invalid," was Mrs. Potter's comment. It had been her idea to put the girls in separate rooms, occupying a couch in the living room herself. Florence was not quite sure whether this was because she wished to stand guard at night before the "outer door," but Mrs. Potter had explained that it would be better for the girls to sleep apart so that they would not talk through half the night about old ways and days, which showed that she was a very practical-minded person and perhaps had more keenness in the matter of details than Mrs. Wainwright herself.

The luncheon was brought in from the kitchenette by Mrs. Potter, assisted by Delane, who had put on an apron for the general amusement. It had not been exactly Florence's idea that men should be incorporated into this domestic scene at the very outset; but now that Delane was here and had been so kind throughout in making this experiment possible for her, there seemed nothing to do but make the best of it. He certainly added to the gayety of the situation, getting on with the girls perhaps better than either Mrs. Potter or Florence would ever be able to.

"Now pitch in," he said, as he removed his apron and pretended that he was going to use it as a napkin. "There's a real homelike atmosphere to this place, so you must just eat a lot and get fat and feel that you belong right here and can do as you please."

"Yes," Florence hastened to interrupt, "I know the girls are going to settle down here very comfortably with Mrs. Potter."

"I think that rosebud paper on my room is swell," Gracie said. "It beats the lilacs at Umber's all to pieces."

"Have you got any 'jazz' for the Victor?" Tommy asked.

"I am not sure whether we have that tune," Mrs. Potter remarked. "Miss Anderton did not bring out many records; but when I went into town yesterday I bought the 'Maiden's Prayer.'"

"What's that?" Gracie asked. "One of them old-fashioned dances?"

"It don't sound much like a foxtrot, I'll say," Delane laughed.

"Let's have a tune while we are eating," Gracie said, as she started up from the table to set the Victrola going.

Florence wondered if Mrs. Potter would have to submit to music with all her meals. However, she seemed to take to the girls remarkably, and sat beaming.

"Say, ain't it great having Mr. Delane stay to dinner with us," Gracie went on. Then, turning toward him, she said, "You must come out often to see us. Just feel that you can hang your hat up here whenever you like."

Florence wished more than ever that Rothwell were here in place of Delane; for while he would not have lent so much festivity to the occasion, with

him quite such a familiar attitude on the part of the girls would not have been possible. It was all very well to have a man about—especially to make these girls contented at the outset of things—but a rather particular sort of man was desirable.

"I am a pretty busy person," Delane was quick to say, when he noticed Florence frowning at him; "and I am afraid I can't be running out here as often as I would like to."

"But all this place belongs to you, doesn't it?" Tommy inquired.

"Yes, indeed," Delane answered. "But I mean I won't be able to stop for social visits when I am out here on business."

"Tommy must be rather quiet for a time," Florence interposed, "and it is just as well that she should not see many people at present."

"With this dinner inside of me, I feel fine," that lady exclaimed, taking another helping of broiled ham and eggs.

"But you must remember what I said the other day," Florence went on, "that to get the full benefit of your stay in Greenvale you must not over-exert yourself."

"And she ought to have a nap every afternoon," Mrs. Potter added.

"That will seem natural," Tommy laughed, "as I always sleep most of the daytime."

Gracie laughed loudly at this; quickly looked at Mrs. Potter and as quickly became absorbed in her food again. From the look of bewilderment on

Mrs. Potter's face, Gracie gathered that perhaps ladies did not sleep in the daytime.

Florence could see from all this what a difficult task it was going to be to get the minds of these girls into a new line of thought. Mrs. Potter, with her "Maiden's Prayer" and afternoon naps for Tommy and an occasional bit of sewing for Gracie, might do much in a certain way; but how to change their general trend of thought, how to bring a new interest into their lives? Besides, whatever result might be attained would be offset by Delane, if he felt that Suite Ten of the Gardenside Apartments was a place where he could hang up his hat whenever he wished. Florence thought that he was intelligent enough to see quite as clearly as she did that too much of him might not be altogether good for the girls who had been suddenly removed from a rather gay and breezy life. Both she and Susan had decided that a man about the premises would be occasionally necessary. They could hardly expect the girls to feel much thrill at the prospect of a convent life with Mrs. Potter as the Mother Superior. It was largely for this reason that Hubert Rothwell had been incorporated into the scheme and had been led to take so much interest in it. As things turned out, however, it appeared to be Delane about whom the thoughts of the young ladies would center. Florence would have to wait to see just what their state of mind was going to be after a few days in the new home. It was rather too early to fear anything or to jump at possible conclusions.

After lunch the Victrola was again started; and Gracie said she would like to have Mr. Delane teach her the new steps. Fortunately for Florence's peace of mind, he had to get back to work and could not stay any longer. He shook hands all around and hurried away, promising to come out again and to bring some more records for the talking machine. Tommy was persuaded to lie down for her afternoon nap; and Gracie helped to do up the dinner things.

Florence could not help noticing how awkward she was about it. It was not that she did not know how to wash and wipe dishes, but she appeared too casual about it all. She laughed and talked, and her mind seemed to be on everything except what she was doing. She dropped and broke a teacup, which incident did not embarrass or annoy her. She took it rather as a joke, although she did say "Damn" when the cup broke. She asked Mrs. Wainwright if she had ever heard the old saying that it was a good sign for a bride to break something when she first moved into her new home. Florence admitted complete ignorance as to the truth of this; and Gracie went on to explain.

"Oh, yes," she said, "one of the first fellers I ever knew, Tom O'leary, got hitched up with a girl by the name of Maggie Collins. He wasn't very soft on her, but I guess he had to marry her to get her out of a scrape. Some men are that easy, you know; and when they get next a girl like Maggie, who was always whining and so scared that

something would happen to her,—why, they just get hitched, that's all. Well, they went out to Somerville to live; and when they moved into their flat—my, but it was a cute little place—the first day they was there Maggie dropped a glass bowl which was one of her wedding presents. She was mighty afraid Tom would come down hard on her for it; but when Tom got home that night and she told him about it, all he said was, 'Oh, sure, my dear, didn't you know that was a good sign? There couldn't be a better one for a newly wedded pair. To smash something, especially if it's chinaware, means we are to have a long life and a gay one'."

"And did they?" Florence asked.

"Sure they did *not*," Gracie replied. "They hadn't been married a year before Tom smashed Maggie up by throwing a plate at her,—and she going to have her second kid. And then she left him. In spite of that, I've always believed in signs."

It was perhaps lucky that Mrs. Potter was not in the kitchen during this edifying recital of Maggie's troubles. When she came back and found the teacup broken, she said nothing beyond remarking that of course accidents would happen.

Then the doorbell rang. Gracie listened through the speaking tube.

"It's a man," she said. "He wants to know if Mrs. Wainwright is here."

"Good gracious," thought Florence, "another man, and so soon after Delane." She knew it was Hubert and decided he must not come up. She

called down the tube and said that she would be right down, and asked him to wait.

"Let's have a look at him. Tell him to come up," Gracie urged, standing at Florence's side. "You're lucky to have so many men friends," she went on. "I'll bet he is good looking."

Florence had to say something and explained that it was some one to see her on business—her brother's land agent—that he was going to show her some new flats in Greenvale. The important thing now seemed to be to get away before Hubert should arrive at the door. He was much too attractive and would be far too nice to Gracie for Florence not to feel some uneasiness in the situation.

Before she left, Florence took Gracie aside and told her briefly how her life would be arranged while she was at Greenvale.

"Mrs. Potter is a seamstress," she said, "and she has work to do at home. I am sure you can be a good deal of help to her. I just wish, as I told you before, that you would not think of going into town for a few weeks. Tommy really needs your care, and Mrs. Potter hasn't the time to look out for her."

"Don't you worry, dearie, about me not taking care of Tommy," Gracie answered. "Many a scrape she's got me out of, and I'll stand by her now, if I never see town again."

"That's fine," Florence exclaimed. "You stand by Tommy, and I will stand by you; then we shall all come out right in the end."

Her parting advice to Mrs. Potter was to let the

girls play the Victrola as much as they liked and not to read aloud to them.

Hubert, in the hallway below, was disappointed that he had not been allowed a glimpse of the girls in their retreat, as he called the flat.

"You would have been all right in place of Delane,—but the two of you both in the same day was rather a large order," Florence laughed. "Whatever made you come out?"

"To go back to town with you," Rothwell replied.

"And rescue me from the other gentleman, I suppose. But he has left already, so you are too late for that."

"But not too late to see you."

"Shall we walk?" Florence asked, as they came out into the main road where the trolley ran.

It was agreed that they would walk part way back to town. As they chatted on the way and stopped on the side of a hill where the distant spires and domes of the city showed through an opening, Florence felt that this was a very pleasant ending to a somewhat strenuous day. She had again that same feeling of repose with Rothwell which she had noticed so often before; the feeling that comes from the companionship of some one who is perfectly congenial, with whom one may be talkative or silent as the mood suggests. As a matter of fact, they walked on for a long distance in silence; and Florence could not but wonder what her friend was thinking about. Not of me, I am sure, she thought.

Her thought was probably correct, for Rothwell

suddenly said, "I suppose you have reckoned on what a big item your food bill out here is going to be, with everything so dear."

Florence laughed. "Yes," she said, "I have tried to take all that into account; but with Susan's aid, I think I can foot the bills until I see how my plan is going to work out."

"You're a brick to do it. I am most awfully interested," Hubert remarked.

Florence was at Susan's the next evening to tell her about the happenings of the preceding day.

"The start seems to have been first rate," Miss Anderton said. "But keep Delane off the scene. Of course you couldn't shake him yesterday; but tell him how you feel about the question of male companionship for the girls."

"I don't want to offend him."

"Don't worry about that. Just let him know that he is to disappear so far as your part in Greenvale is concerned."

"You would not place the same injunction upon Hubert?" Florence asked.

"Oh, no; he doesn't need it," Susan was quick to answer.

She was getting ready to leave town for the summer. It was late June and quite time for a lady of Miss Anderton's nomadic habits to become a part of the annual migration from the city. She had taken a small house on the South Shore and said that she expected Florence to come down often to see her.

"And Hubert,—what will you do with him?" Florence asked.

"Oh, he will stay here," Susan returned; "at any rate, so long as you are in town."

That was all very pleasant for Florence; especially as it was somewhat indefinite whether she would get away at all during the summer. Certain things were coming up in connection with her settlement house work which required her attention; and then she did not care for the present to be too far away from Mrs. Potter's establishment. Max, too, was likely to be very busy and disliked the idea of commuting. They would probably keep the Marlborough Street house open and get off for the week-ends as frequently as possible.

"Have you seen the girls to-day?" Susan asked.

"Yes; I was out there this morning. They are as happy as can be. Tommy was working on a waist for Mrs. Potter, and Gracie was spending hours manicuring her nails and shampooing her hair. Mrs. Potter likes them both, but says Tommy has the best disposition."

Just then the telephone bell rang, and Susan went into the next room to answer it. She came back in a moment to say that Mrs. Potter was on the line and that Florence would better talk with her. Through a rather jumbled and wordy explanation it appeared that Gracie had gone out about seven o'clock to buy some candy for Tommy and had not returned. It was then about ten, and poor Mrs. Potter, by the tone of her voice, was evidently in a

state of acute agitation. She had purposely not called Florence, she said, for fear the news would disturb her,—apparently believing that Miss Anderson would know exactly what to do in the situation.

“But what will you do?” that lady asked.

“Nothing at all, just now,” Florence replied quite calmly. “Ten o'clock is not such a dreadfully late hour of the night.”

“I should say any hour was late for those young women in their present circumstances,” Susan rejoined. After a moment she added, “This may be the blowing up of our Greenvale bubble.”

“Nothing of the sort,” Florence exclaimed vehemently. “What if there is a slip or two at the first? Do you think that will scare me off from my efforts? Would you have me throw up my hands in shocked amazement and beat a hasty retreat?”

“But then, you know,” Susan interrupted, “you can scarcely stand by and look on while—”

“Don't we all look on at things every day of our lives?” Florence continued. “Isn't it one of the stunts of life to see how well we can do it? Perhaps the higher we go in the social scale, the more we have to look on at and excuse; or, to be thoroughly modern, merely smile at and tolerate. No, my dear Susan, in the case of these girls, I shall look on at many things until I have made every effort to save them.”

“You are superb,” was all Susan said.

CHAPTER XI

In the matter of Gracie's disappearance there was nothing that Florence had to look on at or see through, as Mrs. Potter later came forward with the explanation that Gracie had merely gone out to the corner druggist to eat an ice cream, and finding the air of the warm summer night very much to her fancy, had taken a stroll around several of the newly built houses of Greenvale. Perhaps, as Mrs. Potter said, the poor dear had got lost in the wilderness of half-finished streets,—the general openness of the district being something of a wilderness to the good woman's vision, which heretofore had seldom ranged beyond the closely settled streets of Charlestown, her former residence. The only thing that interested Florence was that Gracie had come back. At this early date she did not wish to play the spy upon her slightest movements; and it seemed quite likely that the girl was telling the truth and had merely gone for a walk. However, she felt it advisable to run out to Greenvale the next morning to see the girls, and in an aside told Mrs. Potter not to "poor dear" them too much; but, putting all sentiment by, to look upon them as two perfectly normal young persons.

Susan was off to the shore that day, and Flor-

ence got back to town in time to say good-by. Miss Anderton announced that she was planning a picnic for the following Saturday as a sort of welcome to the Greenvale clan in the little house she had rented for the summer. This all seemed very delightful to Florence, and she promised to bring Max down on the early train Saturday.

"Delane and his sister are to spend Sunday with me," Susan flung out as a parting word.

"You are incorrigible," Florence exclaimed. "However, it is your house and your party. I hope you enjoy them."

"I should not ask them, if I didn't expect to," Susan retorted.

"But the odd part is," Florence went on, "that you didn't like that sort of people in the old times."

"I have knocked about in Europe with far commoner people than the Delane brood," Susan replied; "but over there one was so often taken in by them because they usually had titles hanging on their names."

The Saturday appointed for the picnic was a splendid day; and Florence and Max went down by train, the Delanes having descended upon Susan in their motor the night before. Of course it was a great event for Nora,—a week-end at a South Shore house; and when Florence discovered her on the porch, in a sky-blue dress and rose-covered hat, she really looked as though she were doing her utmost to live up to the situation. Delane was lying in a Gloucester hammock with a glass of iced tea

by his side. He came forward smiling to greet Mrs. Wainwright and her brother, with rather the appearance of feeling that as house guest he must do some of the honors of host. Hubert was off somewhere to fetch Constance Floyd and her friend Mortimer Otis, the latter being a young gentleman who was spending the week-end at the Floyd cottage not far away.

"Isn't this a tip-top day for a lark," Susan exclaimed, showing Florence about the house, "And isn't this a wee dove of a house?"

Delane was at their heels, putting in a word here and there about the views from the various windows; and when the dining room was reached, insisting that Florence should have something to drink, Susan's somewhat diminished supply of the banished spirits having been considerably increased by what Delane brought down with him.

"You know Miss Anderton makes just the loveliest drinks that ever were," Nora called in from the verandah.

About one o'clock the picnic basket was ready; and the little party proceeded to a group of fir trees on the edge of the rocks. It was cool there, with a delightful breeze blowing in from the sea; and far away could be seen what was probably an ocean steamer bound for Europe.

"Doesn't that make you want to go home?" Susan asked Rothwell.

"Not when I am in such pleasant company as this," he answered; and then went on, laughing,

"you know this good lady really wants to get rid of me. She has been trying all winter, and I am sure when the summer came along she thought nothing could keep me away from England in the month of roses. But I just won't go, and she might as well make up her mind to it now or never."

Florence looked up quickly at him as he said this and wondered what was really keeping him so long in America. Certainly Susan, having definitely refused him, could not be the reason; but if it were herself, he gave little enough indication of it. It made her very happy to be here with him in the open on this fine summer day, and what was to her the rather distracting presence of Delane and his sister could in no way dampen her good time.

The food was delicious; cold chicken, sandwiches of every known variety, and rarest of all luxuries, a couple of bottles of champagne, which were brought down from the house in ice by a boy Susan was to employ about the place and whom she called her "general man." Nora, perhaps because she had been tipped off by Delane not to talk too much, was unusually quiet, merely bursting forth occasionally to admire the South Shore scenery, of which she assumed an intimate knowledge, but which she really knew very little beyond the long stretches of Nantasket Beach. Delane made up for his sister's silence by talking a great deal; and sitting on a mossy rock just above and behind Florence, handed things down to her from the basket in what he considered his most cavalier-like manner. It was

really very amusing to her, as Hubert sat just opposite, and it did not much matter who passed her the food.

"Do you know," Delane said, in the midst of dissecting a chicken wing, "that sometimes I get very jealous, Susan, of your European friends."

"How is that?" she asked.

"Well, because they had you so many years, and we poor mortals over here are just discovering you. You're a grand sort."

This was rather prettily said, and of course Max approved of it, as it showed his partner in the best light. He looked over at Florence as much as to say, "Now you see, this fellow is a gentleman, after all."

But Florence had eyes only for Hubert and the deep blue sea beyond. He seemed so much a part of this scene in the bright sunny day. His black hair blowing in the breeze, his soft shirt and flannels so casually worn, were all delightful to her. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled up, and his arms, slightly tanned, were strong and muscular like those of a rower or tennis player. Florence watched his hands and the finely shaped fingers as he opened a sandwich and smiled quietly when he found it was the kind he wanted. The wind caught his hair and blew it about his forehead, his head being clearly defined against the blue of the water. It was all so fine and clear,—so like the man, all strength and simplicity. And he was cold, cold as the sea; that was the whole trouble.

After they had all been eating steadily for some time, although very little food had really been consumed to judge by the still heaped-up basket—it seems always at picnics that one's guests eat so discouragingly little of the vast amount of things provided—the boy appeared again, this time bringing a punch bowl of ice cream.

"Ice cream at a picnic!" Nora Delane cried. "That certainly is going some."

Miss Floyd and her friend Otis, slightly disgruntled by the presence of the Delanes, had betaken themselves to a flat rock somewhat removed from the rest of the party; and there, in duet fashion, had carried on a conversation with much merriment throughout the proceedings. However, at Nora's ecstasies over the ice cream, Miss Floyd saw fit to remark that ice cream had been quite the last word at picnics for several seasons and related how her mother had startled the South Shore colony by serving a full-course dinner on the rocks.

"It must have been confoundedly hard to navigate soup sitting on a wobbly rock," Delane spoke up, at which every one laughed; and the Floyd-Otis combination returned to its duet.

The sun was slanting through the fir trees and a brisk breeze blowing in from the sea. People stood up and moved about; the men lighted their pipes. Florence and Hubert wandered down to a flat stretch of sand at the bottom of the cliffs and found themselves soon followed by Delane and his sister. In a general conversation about swimming

and other out-of-door things, Rothwell mentioned the fact that he preferred tennis to golf, and discovered that Nora played tennis and was rather keen about it.

"Let's go up and have a game," he exclaimed. "The court at the house is in first-rate condition. Do you play?" he said, turning to Mrs. Wainwright.

"I used to," Florence replied; "but, like dancing, my tennis is very seedy."

Nora, feeling that she had captured the Englishman for the afternoon, was intent upon returning to the house; and Rothwell, as he loved the game and was really a crack player, hurried up over the cliffs with Miss Delane, supposing that Florence and Delane would follow.

"I will come up later and watch you," she called out to the retreating figures.

Delane, stepping out to the edge of the water until the waves lapped his shoes, looked along the coast. Farther down was a small bay and leading to it a kind of rocky path. There was a pebbly beach in the curve of the bay shut in on both sides and overhung by evergreens.

"Let's walk on a bit," he said. "There's an awfully pretty place just beyond."

Florence had been thinking of many things as she sat there with Delane slowly moving across her horizon on the sands. If he were always to be in the perspective of her life, she wondered if it would not be just as well to let him come to whatever point he had in view in connection with her. It had

seemed absurd when Susan told her that he had a "crush" on her. And yet in her experiences with him during the past few weeks, at Greenvale and now here at the shore, he had shown such a continued and apparent interest in her that Florence, far from being annoyed, was beginning to be curious. There was something a little pathetic in his dog-like devotion to her; the way he looked at her and listened to her every word. As her brother's friend, surely she could speak plainly to him without fear of wounding if his interest in her were really of the sentimental sort, as Susan would have her believe.

"Yes, let's go along to that nice bay," she said suddenly, jumping up. "I should like the walk."

This pleased Delane immensely, and they started out across the uneven rocky path, Delane helping Florence a number of times over pools of water. If ever, deep in his soul, he had had some vision of bliss, it was pictured now in the emotions he felt in the midst of this scene. All that he had thought about during the past months and the desire for her he had felt could be held down no longer; and when they finally reached the pebbly beach beneath the overhanging trees, Delane's face was flushed and his heart beating with the strongest emotion he had ever known. Suddenly, the natural curiosity that Florence had felt in the situation and all her wonderment at Delane were gone. She knew at once where she stood and what her relation to this man was going to be. She did not have to be told that

she was loved, as she perceived and could actually feel the burning warmth of his passion.

She wanted for a moment to run away, up over the cliffs or back across the rocky path. But that would be childish; for she knew she had purposely led him on to find out on what ground they were to face each other. That there would be from now on a positive ground of approach between them Florence could not doubt. And whether this were to be smooth and flat like some pleasant meadow where flowers grow and where everything is seen clearly, or whether it would be a place of high rocks and ridges, across which they could see each other only with difficulty, was the question. Certainly, in view of her brother's relation to Delane, Florence would have to use her best insight in the matter to make the way as soft as possible for her protagonist. The whole business in which she found herself seemed of a sudden very large and importunate, as Delane stood before her, outlined in all his rugged health, big against the sparkling sea.

It was impossible for Florence to measure in any way this man's conception of her. It had been a thing of such slow growth and yet so insistent in his consciousness from the first time he had beheld her, that probably Delane himself had been unaware until this moment of the strength of his passion. He had long known that he was deeply in love with Mrs. Wainwright; he had long hoped for an opportunity to speak to her. But his connection with her had been really so slight, as far as the intimacies

of life go—so little approaching even to the plane of a happy comradeship—that he had felt like a man lost to himself; like one who possesses infinite treasure but has no way of enjoying his wealth. All through those days soon after he first met Florence, when Max noted his moodiness and absent-mindedness; and later when he came into closer connection with her through the matter of Tommy's accident and the Greenvale affair, he had expected there might be some closer understanding, some sign given, arising from their mutual interests. But there had been nothing. Florence was always the dim object of his desire, hovering night and day like a dream figure on the edge of the realities of life. So his love had grown stronger, and like plants that push long roots into the earth, showing only a suggestion of their vigor in the few green leaves above the soil, Delane's love had burrowed silently and was encircling his heart with innumerable tendrils; while on the surface of his life there was no indication of the thing which had gone down deep, deep into his soul.

Florence leaned against the mossy bank to rest a moment after the walk along the rocks. Delane, looking at her silently, took a few steps away and turned his back on her. Suddenly he lifted his hands high above his head, and with something that sounded like a low moan, turned quickly and came over to where Florence was.

"Mrs. Wainwright," he began, "you have never really known me, have you? You have never tried

to find out what sort of a person I am. It has always seemed as though you did not want to know. Perhaps you haven't liked me; but you have been awfully nice to me,—but may be that was only because you tried to be."

Florence winced a little at the truth of this. Delane did not notice it and was speaking again, more rapidly than before.

"But I don't care what you have thought of me, how much you have not liked me. I want you to know—you have got to know—that I love you."

Florence moved away from out of the shadow of the cliff, and, smiling slightly, stood very erect before Delane and looked straight into his eyes.

"I have loved you since the first time I met you at your brother's,—that night when you were so nice to me. Very few people in the world have been kind to me; and when you were so good and made things so smooth for me, scared and shy as I was like a young heifer,—well, I fell for you then and there. And since that time the thought of you has been in everything I have done; and your face has been before me and the longing for you in my blood, until, God above us!—you must know it all and let me speak out the love that's in me."

Florence was standing now in the open, with her eyes looking out to the sea, and the sunlight that came through the trees at the top of the cliff just touching her hair and the back of her neck. Delane came nearer to her.

"Don't think that I love you with any conven-

tional, stupid kind of love where a man asks a woman to be his wife in the intermission of a dance, and then after they are married dresses her up like a pretty doll and shows the world how much money he can spend on her; but if she displeases him in any way, it's all over, and he is off to the next beauty who is willing to be his pet. I love you in the good, old-fashioned way,—the only way that real love can be spelled; and if they can find a better kind with their divorces and childless marriages, let them find it. It is not for such as me. Here we are by the sea, with the wind off the waves in our ears, and in my heart your beauty. That is the love I have for you, dear Florence,—a big out-of-door love that the sound of all the oceans in the world could not drown.”

Taking Florence's hand, he said very low and huskily, “Look at me, look at me. Give me some word that I have made you feel what I do. Let me go on loving you; let me make you happy; be mine.”

If Florence had not stepped away quickly at this moment, Delane would have seized her, as his arms were almost about her. She was now very near the edge of the water; her cheeks were burning, and her eyes aflame. She was not angry, but frightened.

“Please stop,” was all that she could say to Delane, as he stood somewhat taken by surprise at her evident attempt to get away from him. There was a very terrible expression on his face, almost of anguish, as though he feared the worst to be true, and that Florence felt a physical repugnance to him.

"You will hear me—you must hear me!" he gasped out.

"Please," Florence began again, finding it difficult to speak, "I don't wish to hear any more. That you love me as you say you do, I cannot help. It is one of those things over which neither you nor I have any power. I am old enough to understand all you say. On my part, I can only answer that I am very sorry."

"You mean—you mean—there is no hope?" Delane interrupted, still keeping his distance from her.

"I mean that while you have bowled me over by what you have just told me, I feel glad that you have come out openly with it all. To me—how shall I express it—to me—"

But whatever she was going to say was broken into and stopped by cries from the cliff above of "Florence, Florence—Jim, where are you? Tea is being served on the verandah, and you must come back at once."

"Damn!" Jim ejaculated and sank down on the nearest rock, burying his face in his hands.

Susan, who had lingered in the picnic group with Miss Floyd, Max, and Otis, had not seen Nora and Rothwell when they pursued their way to the house by a different path from the one they had taken down to the beach. Hence, when somewhat later Susan and her little group started home, and she spied Hubert and Miss Delane hard at tennis and was told by them that they had left the others at the foot of the cliff—the others being

what was for Miss Anderton the terrifying combination of Florence and Jim—she hurried back to the edge of the rocks and, glancing down distractedly here and there to the places where she thought they might be, had at last caught sight of Florence.

The cry was really a welcome one,—at least to Florence; although later she wished she had had time to indicate more definitely to Delane what his attitude must be toward her and in what light she would have to look upon him hereafter. On the way up to the house she did have a chance to say that she should not mention to her brother a word of what had happened. She felt he would be angry if he knew, and that she would do almost anything rather than embarrass the good relations existing between Max and Delane.

“You may trust me,” she added, “to act as if nothing had occurred between us.”

“How about Susan?” Delane asked.

“I don’t see that Susan comes into the matter,” Florence replied.

But Susan did come into the matter, just as she was bound to come into all matters, whether near or remote to her. After Max and Florence had left that evening for town and Miss Nora Delane had retired to her chamber to revel in the latest popular novel, propped up in bed under the rays of a charming pink drop-lamp, Delane alone with Susan on the moonlit porch unburdened himself as perhaps he had never done before. It was as though it did not count what he said or how far he disclosed the

state of his heart, now that he had shown his cards to Florence.

"I probably should not have gone so far," he said, after telling Susan in some detail of the scene on the beach.

"But I don't see that you did go far," Susan returned. "You were certainly the gentleman throughout."

"Yes," Delane went on gloomily; "but it wasn't because I wished to be. There are times when a person would like to be anything but a gentleman."

Susan made a little movement of deprecation which did not escape him.

"I mean there are times when a fellow would like to say his whole mind, or rather, act it, if that expresses better the idea; and when it drives you mad to feel that you are hedged about with all the conventionalities of life."

"You are an admirable soul, Delane," Susan interrupted. "I only wish that the girl you would like to walk off with were not Florence. She's not the sort to be kidnapped."

"It was beautiful down there by the water," Jim continued, not heeding this. "And the girl I love standing there with the light blowing in her hair; the sound of the waves over us and love singing in my heart. I had to speak; I had to tell Florence what she has come to mean to me. And she was cold and afraid, and moved away from me." After a pause he added slowly, "Then she told me to stop; and made a pretty, civil little speech and said that

no one should know of what had passed between us. It was as though the whole transaction had been something criminal, and I was trying to steal her away across the deep blue sea in a boat, like the old-time stories."

"Florence, I am sure, was surprised rather than made afraid by what you said," Susan put in.

"Both," Delane exclaimed. "She was both,—and a bit angry too. But what had I said to make her afraid of me? What has a girl to fear anyway from a man who loves her as I do? And why shouldn't she tell her brother about it all, or think that he will be angry if he knows? Max is a man of flesh and blood, and my pal. Wouldn't he be pleased to see a match between me and his sister? You bet he would. I know Max better than his sister does."

Susan wondered how she could convey to Delane the knowledge that Max Kendall most certainly would *not* care to see a match between Florence and his partner in business. She did not wish to hurt him; and she had tried so hard the night he was at her house to make him see the difference between Florence's world and his own. Then she had placed the emphasis upon her friend's absorption in her work; perhaps now it would be necessary to speak the plain truth. And yet her admiration for Delane and the appeal of his strong, frank passion held her tongue-tied in any effort she might make to awaken him to the situation.

At last she said, "Why don't you speak to Max about this and tell him the whole story?"

"You mean press my suit for the sister through the brother?"

"Not exactly that; but find out what his attitude is before you say anything more to Florence. However," Susan added, "if Florence does not care for you, as I suspect is the case, I don't see that anything further need be said."

"Give up now, after one small attempt?" Delane ejaculated. "I guess you don't know me," he went on excitedly. "That isn't the way I behaved with Greenvale, is it? Max was faint-hearted and would have thrown up the whole proposition if I hadn't prodded him on. The contractors told us the land was impossible of development; there was no trolley near the place. Well, did I throw up my hands at all that? Didn't I convince Kendall and win over the contractors and push the matter of the railway franchise until we got the cars? I didn't back down on that proposition, and I guess I am not going to back down on this one either. Not just yet," he said, as he got up and strode over to the edge of the verandah and looked out across the moonlit sea.

There was a long silence. It seemed to Susan that the deep boom of the ocean was like the throbbing of fate hanging over Florence's life and that of Delane. What could she do against such forces?

"My, but the sea is beautiful to-night!" Delane

finally said, turning again to his friend. "I wish Florence hadn't gone back to town."

In that brief sentence Susan knew he had said more than in all the more excited passage of a few moments ago.

The dull booming of the ocean went on. Delane seemed so helpless; mankind seemed so helpless in the presence of that great throb of life which was like the desire which is in the hearts of all men for happiness and love.

CHAPTER XII

Beyond the amazement Florence felt after the scene with Delane on the rocks, her chief impression was that her feeling of dislike for him was more deeply planted within herself than she had supposed; that her original lack of sympathy with him had developed, on account of the close quarters to which they had come, into something very like a repellent attitude toward him. This being the case, she saw that it would be necessary some day to have a more definite understanding than had been possible during the interrupted scene at the picnic. However, the appearance of Mrs. Potter drove thoughts along this line out of her mind. Mrs. Potter was having trouble with the girls.

"It is not that they are misbehaving themselves," Mrs. Potter hastened to explain, when Florence had finished her breakfast and was ready for an interview with the official chaperone of Greenvale; "but they do not pull together or with me."

Florence smiled serenely, as she had not looked toward any marked "pulling together" between souls of such different types. At any rate, not during the first few weeks of her Greenvale household. A mere getting on with each other and a semblance of harmony on the surface was about as much as she

dared hope for. Her relief at Mrs. Potter's words lay in the fact that the latter had announced that her charges were behaving themselves.

"You must not expect too much at the beginning," Florence remarked.

"I did expect though," Mrs. Potter went on, "that Gracie would know how to sew and would be of some assistance to me. It is worse than having no one to help; for I have to take out nearly everything she does."

"I thought the matter of assistance was going to be rather the other way round," Florence ventured.

This remark was lost on Mrs. Potter, who exclaimed, "What can I do with two lazy girls on my hands? Tommy is always pleasant and cheery, but will not work. She doesn't even like to help me in the kitchen, as she says she was sent out to the country to rest. The other one tries to be industrious but seems to have no faculty with the needle. As I said, I have to take out nearly every stitch of sewing she does. The other day she ruined Mrs. Morton's new blue satin waist,—cut straight through a lovely old piece of lace which had got caught on something."

Florence nearly laughed, so intense was Mrs. Potter and so complete her failure to see anything beneath the surface of the girls' inability in domestic affairs. She herself had expected very little from them in this line.

"Of course the flat is beautiful," Mrs. Potter resumed. "I have not lived in such a pleasant place

since my husband passed on; that was when we were in Somerville and had a little garden of our own. I had hens then and used to make quite a bit of pin money off them. I gave Mr. Potter a French clock one Christmas with the money I made from my hens. I feel much better, of course, to get out of that stuffy old street in Charlestown where I have lived ever since dear William died. But I didn't have so many worries there."

It was easy to appreciate the difficulties; but Florence felt she must go slowly, taking sides with the girls whenever it was reasonably decent for her to do so, if only for the sake of keeping them in Greenvale as long as possible. Later she hoped she could place them somewhere in definite work. For the present, to soothe Mrs. Potter's troubled mind and allay her worries was her chief object. It almost seemed as though it might be more of a task to persuade her to remain in Greenvale than to keep the girls there.

"You must not be too exacting," Florence said, after a moment.

"Exacting!" exclaimed Mrs. Potter. "Is it exacting for me to expect those girls to do a little work,—to help me with my sewing and wash up the dishes? Only this morning Gracie broke another plate, and Tommy's clothes are in such a condition that I will probably just have to sit down myself and do some mending on them. I don't see how they grew up without knowing more about household matters."

"Would you know much about such things if you had never had a home?" Florence inquired.

"But every one has a home,—some time. Of course I know what you told me about them and the sort of way they have been living, and I feel sorry for them. But between you and me there's a screw loose somewhere."

"There usually is," Florence interrupted.

"It isn't reasonable to suppose," Mrs. Potter continued, "that those girls are right in their heads, or they would not have led such harum-scarum lives."

Florence rose and went over to the window. She wondered if all her plans were to be upset through the failure of this woman to understand what she was trying to do.

"It is merely to give them a chance," she said at last. "That is all I wish for the present, and you must help me now that I have gone so far." She turned and came back to Mrs. Potter and stood looking down at her. "I often think that I would like to see all the miserable families living in the worst degradation of poverty, without sufficient clothes or proper food, given one chance in life. Do you realize that the fine home conditions, the education, comforts and luxuries which have come down to you and me are what these people have never known? Their heritage of poverty, sickness and sin has gone on endlessly. It is bad enough to have had money, to lose it and to have to struggle for your daily bread and butter. But how much

worse to have your parents and grandparents obscure people who never knew where their next meal was coming from; to be born and raised in such conditions and to go on to a worse poverty and obscurity. They are in a dark corridor where perhaps in the beginning there was a little light, but that light is so far away down the long passage of time that now they are in utter blackness; and the light ahead that should shine for them in the name of humanity and progress flickers and goes out. I only ask that these people be given one chance. Let the families have a clean home, decent clothing and sufficient food for one immortal moment in their lives; then see what would happen."

Mrs. Potter sat with the promise of a smile upon her face, feeling undoubtedly that her way in life lay among a class of people so different from the ones Mrs. Wainwright was talking about that she could scarcely be expected to fully understand what was being said. Attendance at Tuesday evening prayer meetings and a lifelong singing of hymns which tended to the lachrymose had done very little to help this woman understand the humanities of life. Yet Florence proceeded.

"I know what you and the world think," she said, "that in nearly every case they would throw away the opportunity; that the men would be shiftless, drink if they could find the liquor, and neglect their wives and let the children go dirty the same as ever. But I don't believe this would be true of all, and I never shall. Until society can afford to

risk the experiment and in a wholesale manner wipe out the slums—burning up the wooden infernos of disease and vice—and set large communities of these people on their feet in human working conditions, I shall believe that somewhere in the bottom of their souls lies a spark which would respond.”

Mrs. Potter thought it was high time to put in a remark, if her own little worries and cares were to receive any attention.

“But some of the poor do rise out of it; some of the very poorest become rich and famous,” she said. “Look at Mr. Carnegie and Abraham Lincoln.”

“Not the kind of people that I am talking about,” Florence answered. “I speak of the ones who often have no work at all; are not skilled in any trade. The ones who frequently figure in the police courts and whose dull faces used to hang over the bars of the saloons.”

“Very unpleasant people indeed,” Mrs. Potter interrupted.

“Give them one chance, I say,” Florence went on. “Let them for once be clean, breathe good air; and let them feel that some one has at last stepped between them and their long heritage of suffering. It all sounds chimerical, and you are smiling that society should be foolish enough to attempt such a thing.”

“I was only wondering,” Mrs. Potter said quietly, “who would furnish the cash.”

“But societies and civilizations from time immemorial have gone into wars; have given the last

dollar of the community to send armies into the field; to enlarge navies, and clothe and care for a million men that they might go out to die. Well, why not to live? Why not tax your community heavily as it is taxed in time of war and use the money to make men fit to live? Charitable organizations, personal effort, the philanthropy of rich men, and societies for the prevention of this and the prevention of that, are all doing what they can; but the thing must be started on a different basis. It is not merely a matter of raising wages, averting strikes and coming to understandings between employer and employee. It is the business of the whole world, each country doing its share; and the watchword shall be justice and an equal chance for every man. Democracy will break down, is breaking down, under the false theory that every man has equal ability. No two men are equal in ability, just as no two minds are exactly alike. One iota of intelligence in the one makes the difference. But all men should have an equal chance to pursue life according to their varied talents. This will not be possible until the blackness of our slums and the degradation of poverty are removed; and when society, turning from thoughts of progress to the ideals of humanity, shall cry, 'Let there be light.' "

Florence stopped, smiling a little when she thought of her audience. Mrs. Potter looked bewildered.

"My husband was a great man for those democratic principles," she said at last. "He used to say, 'I guess I am just as good as James Swiggins,'

—he was our next-door neighbor,—‘even if Jim has been able to send his boy to college.’ But then, we never had any children. I guess I am just as well off, though, in my old age, for never having gone through the experience.”

“Come, Mrs. Potter,” Florence said, laughing, “you have had enough of my social theories; let’s go out and see the girls.”

This served to bring Mrs. Potter back to earth, for the poor woman was becoming somewhat vague. When they reached Greenvale an hour later Florence thought her “experiment” was indeed not in its most promising mood. The flat looked disorderly; the breakfast dishes were unwashed, and a number of pieces of sewing were lying about on the floor, while Gracie and Tommy were talking together in the dining room with the Victrola in full swing. Florence, realizing Mrs. Potter’s agitation, pretended to view the matter calmly; although she could not fail to be displeased to see how long habit and the inability of the girls was showing itself.

“Come now, Gracie,” she said, as an opening wedge, “this is not the way I behave in my home in the morning. The house has to be tidied up; whatever sewing there is to be done, attended to; and things put to rights. I don’t see why you should take this liberty with Mrs. Potter; for this is her home, as well as yours for the time being, and you must respect it. I did not send you out here merely to have a good time. I want you to learn to be industrious and to behave yourselves like ladies; for

I think neither of you girls realize how bad it looks to be wasting the morning in this way. You might just as well learn it now as later."

This was the first time Mrs. Wainwright had ever lectured to them, and both Gracie and Tommy were embarrassed. They did not seem to be sorry for what they had done but rather afraid they might be sent back to the city and were plainly ill at ease, wondering if their patron were very angry with them.

Florence took off her hat and coat, put on one of Mrs. Potter's aprons and, going into the kitchenette, began to pile up the dirty dishes preparatory to washing them. The amazement on the part of the girls was not greater than Mrs. Potter's. Finally Gracie stepped forward and took hold of Florence's arm.

"That's no work for you to be doing. Let Tommy and me do the clearing up," she exclaimed, showing at last some interest in the matter.

She picked up the dish pan, filled it with hot water from the kettle, and was soon busy with soap and towel.

"We will all do it together," Florence said, "and then it will be the sooner over."

This idea pleased the girls immensely, and they helped with a right good will, insisting that Mrs. Potter should stay out of the kitchen and attend to her sewing.

"It is rather fun doing housework, isn't it, when there are a lot of people messing about together?"

Tommy remarked, as she wiped and polished the knives and forks.

"It is certainly easier that way," Florence replied.

Gracie began to hum a popular song. "There's an awfully good picture at Jordan's Olympic this week," she said, in the midst of her singing. "Pearl Burr in 'Buttons and the Man'; and I was wondering if it would be all right for us to go in to see it to-morrow."

"Perfectly all right," Florence answered quickly, "if you are certain you will not run into any of your old friends and waste your time sitting around in cafés. You know that sort of thing really isn't any fun. There are lots of things that are much better sport."

"Oh, no, we won't do that," Gracie said, "for Mr. Delane will take us to the movies any day we want to go. I only have to telephone him, you see."

Florence did not know just what to say to this. It was all very well for Delane to take an interest in the girls,—especially as he had done so much to make the present project possible; but she could not approve of the idea of his being so friendly and so much one of the family that he could be summoned by telephone at any moment, like an old pal.

"I hardly think it right to presume too much on Mr. Delane's time," she said at last. "Of course, you would have to see the picture in the afternoon, as you know that you agreed not to go out in the evening until Tommy is stronger. I am sure it would be asking a great deal of a very busy man

to suggest that Mr. Delane should do anything in the afternoon."

"The afternoons are all right for him at this time of the year," Tommy interrupted. "He is coming out to-day to take us to ride. Gee! that's funny dope," she added, after a moment, "to be riding around with the swell young feller in the auto that broke your leg."

Some of the difficulties that were bound to occur in Florence's Greenvale scheme seemed to be appearing with remarkable swiftness. There was Mrs. Potter's dissatisfaction; the lack of industry and purpose on the part of the girls; and now the appearance of the male element on the scene, which perhaps affected Florence more unpleasantly than any slight domestic friction in the flat could have done. She had known from the first that some sort of a man would be desirable, if Gracie and her friend were to remain reasonably contented in the country. She would almost have liked a husband for Mrs. Potter, who, in spite of his age, would at least have been in trousers. She only wished that the man had not appeared in the person of Delane. Why she should feel so strongly this uneasiness about him she could not quite tell; except that she had felt it from the beginning, during those days at the hospital over the sick bed of Tommy. But since his declaration of devotion to herself, it would be logical to expect that he was not in the state of mind to pursue the general feminine in place of the special.

It occurred to her now that the only thing to do was to let Delane play around with the girls until she should see things which would necessitate a halt in the proceedings. She could not see the whole scheme fall through on account of her own squeamishness. She decided to stay to luncheon that she might be on the spot when Delane came to take the girls out riding and show him that she was quite aware of his interest in them.

The presence of Mrs. Wainwright at the table had a very cheering effect upon Mrs. Potter's little household; and that lady became so brightened in spirits that she said she would go herself to the movies with the girls whenever they wished. Gracie, frowning at Tommy, remarked that she did not believe Mrs. Potter would like "Buttons and the Man" because Pearl Burr was such an awful "vamp," and that some of her clothes would surely shock "Aunt Agnes."

"Why the 'Aunt Agnes?'" Florence asked. It was the first time she had heard this title for Mrs. Potter whose given name happened to be Mary.

"Oh, because it sounds sort of like a 'Maiden's Prayer,'" Tommy replied, at which every one burst out laughing.

Mrs. Potter did not seem to mind the nickname and ate her stewed kidneys and baked potato with great relish.

Delane appeared promptly at half-past two and was not at all surprised to find Mrs. Wainwright there. In fact, Florence was somewhat discoun-

tenanced by his desire that she should join them on the ride. He was apparently trying to make it evident to her more clearly than ever that it was only because of his fondness for her that he was playing attendance upon Gracie and Tommy.

In a confidential aside he said, "I am doing everything in my power to make them contented here and to make this plan of yours a success. You know they have got good stuff in them,—especially Gracie. I realize that girls of their type won't stay marooned out here in the country with an old lady; so I just drop in on them every chance I get. Of course you don't mind."

Florence made no direct answer to this; but she intimated that persons of the sort he was talking about were very susceptible to anything in trousers, and that perhaps a little of him would go a great way.

"You can be very funny, Mrs. Wainwright," he said. Then after a moment, "I hope I didn't annoy you much by what I said the other day."

"It depends on what you mean by much," Florence replied.

"That I did not take you too much by surprise."

"I was quite as surprised as it is possible for a person to be," Florence said.

"But you must have known—"

"I knew nothing; had no suspicion of your feeling toward me."

"Then you have thought about it?" Delane pursued.

"Don't let's talk of that here," Florence murmured, as the girls came into the room, dressed to go out.

Florence would not accept the invitation to ride into town; but waving good-by to the party in the motor, returned to the house for a chat with Mrs. Potter. In the course of the conversation it was revealed that Gracie had been taken one evening by Delane into town for dinner. As she had had so little excitement, it seemed all right to let her go, Mrs. Potter thought; and had said nothing about it for fear of worrying Florence.

"With any one else, naturally I would have said No," Mrs. Potter explained. "But Mr. Delane is a friend of yours, and I knew she was in safe hands."

Safe hands? Florence wondered. One thing very plain to her was that Mrs. Potter, with her trusting attitude and lack of experience in the ways of the world, might require quite as much oversight as the girls.

That evening Rothwell dropped in to see Florence. Max was out, which suited Florence's purposes perfectly, for she wanted to ask Rothwell about several things. He was staying at the shore with Susan and said that he had run up to town especially to see Mrs. Wainwright,—probably, she thought, at Susan's suggestion.

"I want to know," Florence began, "if you really like Jim Delane; if you think he is the right sort. I should like to get a man's opinion of him. Of

course, my brother's idea of him is not much good since he is so frightfully partial."

"Why, I don't know that I have ever thought much about Delane one way or the other," Rothwell answered. "People like him I don't usually think of as being the right or wrong sort,—they are just themselves, you see, and it is not necessary to pigeonhole them."

"What a perfect system you English have," Florence said, smiling. "For you there is really only one kind of people, and the rest don't matter."

"I don't know about that," Rothwell went on. "The outsiders are all very well, sometimes noticeably so, as in the case of Delane. But they are still outsiders, aren't they?"

"Americans haven't that word 'outsiders,'" Florence continued. "And I think it rather shows our different point of view because we don't use it as you do. I admit we often err the other way and fail to make distinctions between people, necessary distinctions which are good for both classes. Our society loses a certain tone in consequence. But it is natural for us to have a healthy curiosity about people in every walk of life. That curiosity, so inherent in the American temperament, leads to a kind of understanding and sympathy. That is our social grace,—perhaps our only one."

"You will confess, though, won't you," Rothwell said, after a moment, "that I get on better with Delane than you do; and this in spite of calling him an outsider."

"That is the curious part," Florence exclaimed; "he interests me, but I frankly acknowledge I do not like him."

"There you are," Rothwell continued. "Delane does not interest me in the slightest, but I have taken something of a fancy to him."

Florence was silent a moment. Then she said, "Perhaps your system works better than ours. You never make an effort to get inside another person's skin, but you have a natural good humor toward people which certainly makes for social amenity. What I want to know is, would you trust Delane?"

"Surely your brother is the man for you to ask that," Rothwell was quick to reply.

"Oh, Max swears by Delane. He admires his business ability, and he likes him as a man."

"Then why do you need any further light on the subject?"

"Because there are different angles in a subject," Florence answered. "There are aspects of Delane that I must consider which would never enter my brother's mind at all."

"And you think I am a better thermometer respecting certain values," Rothwell laughed. "You mean in connection with Greenvale?"

"Yes," Florence said. "Delane has helped to make it possible for me to place those two girls of mine in Greenvale. He has shown an interest in the project from the beginning; and he is now dancing attendance upon Gracie and Tommy,—so that they may have a little diversion," she added, with a

laugh. "But a number of things have happened lately which have made me wonder if he is doing all this merely to gain my good will,—to square himself with me. Is his interest really sincere? That is what I would like to find out."

"But how should I know?" Rothwell inquired, with the blankest expression imaginable. "I have seen Jim with Susan, with you and Max,—here and there quite casually; and I have always had a jolly good time with him."

"You delightful soul!" Florence cried, jumping up. "Don't bother your dear old head about the complicated things of life; but come into the other room and play the piano for me."

There was not the slightest doubt in Florence's mind that she was in love with Rothwell. On the night of Susan's party, when she had felt that overwhelming attraction in him, she had tried to fight against it. She had continued to do so for a long time after, even when she knew that he was above all other people the one she liked best to be with. Then during Susan's absence from Boston, when she had made special efforts to give him a good time, she had fought against the knowledge that he was anything more to her than a friend. But now she wanted him as a lover; and as he sat playing to her this evening, she felt all his charm. His very coolness of attitude was part of the charm he held for her. Perhaps because he had never been sentimental with her—had never regarded her other than as a good pal with whom he had had many jolly times—

added to the fascination. He really played the piano delightfully. He did so many things well; and yet his mind was as simple as a child's. Florence wondered if she would care to have a husband like that, at the same time letting her fancy run on until she could imagine perfect happiness with such a man. How different from her brother, who was always concentrated upon the essentials of life. How much he seemed to miss because of that; and yet, Florence wondered, as Rothwell broke into the splendid opening bars of the Grande Valse of Glazunov, if it were not just on account of missing the finer shades of life that American men had been able to go so far in the realities of business and finance. The success that comes with achievement in the world of affairs brings with it a certain lack of appreciation. Rothwell belonged undoubtedly to the decorative side of life.

The music stopped. Rothwell sat looking across the piano at Florence, who was in the corner of the room under the shaded glow of a big lamp.

"Did you like that?" he asked.

"Yes; play some more. I love it all."

He struck a few chords at random and then dashed into a Chopin étude,—the one known as the "Butterfly." Rothwell was essentially masculine, hearty and full of the love of out-of-door life, and yet he played Chopin with infinite grace and feeling. Florence had known men who played delightfully or painted, and she had met professional pianists in Paris and known one or two rather well. But they

had been very different; so little suggestive of anything beyond their art. Although long hair had long since passed out of fashion for the concert stage, they were the sort of men who suggested the bizarre in appearance. They were anemic or with the burned-out expression of men who have succumbed to every passion. Rothwell's face was cast in a fine mold. His features were sensitive and his eyes very beautiful; but the whole effect was of the perfectly normal type. This was what had so often impressed Florence. She loved his strength, and she admired the delicacy of his mind.

"To play like that there must have been a time when you studied very hard," Florence said, as the music came to an end.

"Yes, I played quite seriously for a number of years," Rothwell replied. "I had a chum who painted,—Harry Mawson, a splendid fellow. He went over to Paris to study his art, and I went with him. We took a studio together and had great fun; although I think my playing rather got on Mawson's nerves when he was trying to concentrate on a particularly good model."

"Of course you did not know Susan then," Florence put in.

"No, indeed; she is a later event in my life. Mawson was killed in the war. Since then—in fact, since the war—I seem to have cared very little about my music. I think I like life too much to spend my days cramped up over a piano, trying to make myself into a virtuoso. And then you see Susan has

been rather an absorbing interest the last year or two."

There was a pause, and Florence seemed to feel for the first time the intensity of this man's devotion to her friend. She never had believed it could be anything but a deep admiration on the part of Hubert, the discrepancy in years between himself and Susan putting out of her mind any thought of the romantic. But she realized now that it was something far deeper and more vital than mere friendship.

"The pity is," Hubert said at last, "the lady won't marry me."

Florence would have been inclined to laugh if she had not seen so clearly the sadness behind his words.

"I suppose I shall go back to England and end my days in bachelorhood," he went on, getting up from the piano.

"That should not be necessary," she ventured.

Hubert stood looking down at her. The lamp-light surrounded him with a kind of rosy halo. How Florence wanted to cry out, "Look at me; take me as your wife. I am ready; I am only waiting for the word. I love you. I know now the strength of that love; for you have only to stand there all aglow before me to make my whole being thrill with the desire of you."

But those words could not be said. Florence merely looked at him and then down at the floor; and Hubert was moving away from her. The in-

timate word had not been spoken. Would she ever be able to touch the vital note in him? Would she ever arouse in him the feeling that he caused in her? Would he go out of her life, leaving only the sweet memory of a great beauty which had passed across her vision like those glimpses that one gets sometimes on the sea between sundown and twilight when all is illumined by the unearthly color that no poet or painter could ever depict,—the light that never was upon heaven or earth but which lies deep down in the soul of every mortal?

She did not know. After Hubert had gone, Florence sat a long time in the dimly lighted room while her thoughts floated far away, dreaming of a possible happiness. She felt like weeping, but instead of giving way to that mood, she turned out the light and went upstairs saying to herself, "I wonder if I am getting foolishly sentimental."

CHAPTER XIII

Florence was with Hubert most of the next day when they went together to one of the country clubs near town; they had luncheon, played nine holes of golf, and spent the rest of the afternoon cooling off with the aid of tall glasses of iced tea sipped on the porch of the clubhouse. Rothwell returned in the evening to Susan and the sea breezes of the shore, as he had a tennis match to play early the next morning. That evening Florence was still in what she had chosen to call her sentimental mood about Hubert when Max came into the room, announcing that if the building fever kept on at its present pace in Greenvale, and land values there continued to rise, he would be a rich man before very long.

"That is fine," Florence said, getting up. "But I am tired of the business of life. It all amounts to so little in the total reckoning."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Max put in. "But my totals won't be small, if that is what you mean."

His sister laughed. Suddenly she said, "Does Delane ever talk about me?"

"He used to talk a good deal about you,—just after he first met you. He was always trying to arrange some party with you, or expecting that I

would bring him up to the house to see you. But I knew how you felt on the subject, and I did not let him get very far." Max was silent a moment. "I wish you liked Jim better," he added.

"I wish I did," Florence said a little sadly. "It would simplify matters so."

"You mean that you know Jim is pretty keen about you."

"Of course. But you wouldn't like me to reciprocate, would you?"

"My dear girl!" Max exclaimed, crossing over to Florence and putting his arm about her. "Whatever made you think of that?"

"Because I try to think of everything that has to do with your happiness," she answered.

"I would be the last person to want Jim Delane as a brother-in-law," Max went on vehemently. "My welfare can go hang before he shall ever make love to you."

Florence started to say something, and then she stopped. She knew it was better not to tell her brother that Delane had already declared himself to her. She had cause to wonder later if it would not have been wiser if she had told him all; but there was the fear that he would speak to Delane and might antagonize him, which quite naturally might lead to a difficulty in their business relations.

She continued to wonder; but as the months went by and she saw nothing of Delane, who had gone into the country for a holiday, she never spoke of him to her brother. Max was too busy to leave the

office for a vacation; but Delane could indulge himself, seeing how the success of Greenvale was not such a necessary factor in his finances as it was to Kendall. The departure of Delane to the country had really taken a burden off Florence's mind, as she was never altogether comfortable now when he was about, feeling that at any time he might break forth into the subject of his devotion to her. But she thought he must have come now to a realization of her attitude toward him; that Susan had probably helped her in this matter, and that those complications which she had imagined earlier in the summer had vanished into air, as such things are likely to do when seen in perspective.

It was autumn now, and Susan was preparing to leave the shore. Florence went down for a last visit with her. Rothwell, who was staying at a nearby hotel, spent most of his time at Miss Anderson's. There were some fine walks with him along the cliffs in the sharp September wind. One day he and Florence set out late in the afternoon. Everything was gold and blue. The bayberry bushes and thorn berries had turned red; the sun made them a deep copper color. The sunlight came slanting through gray clouds and had the rich yellow tone of early autumn. The sea was indigo. Rothwell, swinging a stick and without a hat, marched on ahead of Florence in the narrow footpath at the top of the rocks. He seemed to her all edged with gold, a fine figure against the deep blue sea.

At last they sat down in a sheltered corner of

the cliffs; sat very close to each other, and Hubert could feel his companion pressing slightly against him. Florence had never been so near him, had never felt before the charm of his personality so close to her. He was gazing into the beyond and humming a melody, one of the things he was in the habit of playing. She was swept away into space by this nearness to the man she loved. He must feel it, he must respond, she thought. A flock of birds going south for the winter shot like an arrow across the sky and disappeared into the radiant distance.

After a time Hubert put his arm around Florence and took her hand. She allowed herself to slide over against him, her head resting on his shoulder. Not a word was said. The wind sang through the low growth of bushes behind them. Far down the long sweep of shore two men were pulling in a boat. The sun caught them now and then, and they stood out in bright relief like figures in a play when all the light is directed on them. A thin spiral of smoke, so indistinct that it was almost a part of the sky, hung on the edge of the horizon where some steamer was dipping down across the great curve of the world. For Florence, perfect bliss; for the man, a slight uneasiness and a wild confusion of thoughts in his brain. Rothwell was not sure just how fond he was of this woman beside him. That he admired her and liked being with her there could not be a shadow of doubt in his mind. But did he love her? If he were not head

over heels in love with her, upon which point he thought he saw himself quite clearly, he wondered if he would ever feel any more strongly attracted by any one. Perhaps he was not the sort to fall dizzily in love; and yet he knew what his attitude toward Susan had been. That for him had been a deep devotion. He never had been much good at the ordinary flirtation kind of thing, and the mere fact that a very beautiful girl was sitting beside him could not change the general habit of his mind. "Confound it," he declared to himself, "this is all too mental. I am reasoning all this out in a cold-blooded manner. But doesn't this prove," his train of thoughts ran on, "that I am not desperately smitten in the present situation?"

And so they sat for perhaps an hour; when Florence, feeling the wind to be getting rather brisk and realizing that no warmth was to be expected from her companion to offset the temper of the climate, proposed that they go home. It was a welcome suggestion to Hubert, who was beginning to feel a slight awkwardness and was wondering just how much he ought to say if he spoke at all of the ambiguous situation which seemed to have arisen between himself and Mrs. Wainwright. When they got back to the Anderton cottage Florence was both radiant and angry. The man seemed to her impossible. Would he never see things as they really stood? She said good night as shortly as could be done with decency and retreated to her room.

"What is the matter with Florence?" Susan asked.

"I have seen quite plainly this afternoon that she is very fond of me."

"And of course you remained an icicle," Susan exclaimed. "I would like to give you a good beating."

"But how can you expect me to love every pretty girl that you throw in my way?"

"Florence Wainwright is not a girl, and I don't expect you to flirt promiscuously," Susan blurted out. "But she is just the match for you, and I see that you are a goose."

"Don't be hard on me, dear Susan," Hubert laughed. "Surely I must have time to make up my mind."

"Oh, damn your mind. It's your heart that ought to tell you what to do."

"That's just the trouble," Rothwell went on, quite undismayed by his friend's vehemence. "It doesn't."

The next day he stayed away; but another man appeared on the scene. This was no other than Delane. His arrival was most unexpected, for he was supposed to be in the White Mountains somewhere in a camp with his sister and several congenial spirits. He said he had not intended to be away so long, but that he had not been altogether well and his doctor had advised country air; while Max had assured him that things were going all right at the office, and there was absolutely no hurry for him to return.

"But I had to see Max before he went to New

York," Delane continued, in explanation of himself.

"Yes; he is going over to-night," Florence replied, "and I am returning to town this afternoon to pack him off."

"That is such a pity, just as I have arrived," Delane exclaimed. "By the way, I was with Max all day yesterday; and he especially told me to say that you were not to hurry up to town to-day to see him off. That he was quite all right and wouldn't be away more than a fortnight."

"That is all very good of Max," Florence said, "but I was leaving to-morrow, anyway. Poor Susan has certainly had enough of me for one season. It seems as though I had been coming and going all summer. There must be other friends that you would like to have stay with you before you close this house," she continued, turning to her friend.

"I will invite Jim at once," Susan replied. "But you know how simple it would be for me to put you both up."

A sort of companion—combination seamstress and ex-lady's maid—had been with Susan throughout the summer; so that Rothwell's frequent appearances and these casual invitations to other men had not caused a flutter among the South Shore colony, although it must be admitted that some of the more elderly Floyds and Crumpletons—a family of more than "Social Register" standing, having had two great-grandfathers in the Revolution and no end of silver on the *Mayflower*—looked rather askance

at the buxom Miss Anderton and her free and easy ways, savoring, they thought, a little too much of the shores of the Mediterranean to be in the picture out here on the rock-bound Atlantic coast.

"Of course I will stay," Delane laughed; "and you must persuade Mrs. Wainwright to do the same."

"It is impossible," Florence said. "I want to see Max before he goes; and more than that, my settlement house begins its work for the winter to-morrow with a special meeting in the morning to devise ways and means—really one of the most important meetings we have the entire year—and I must not miss it. I will have to go this afternoon," she concluded. "Please look up the trains for me, Susan."

Miss Anderton, whose sureness never failed her in the matter of details, announced there was an excellent train at five-four, which would get Florence to town in plenty of time to see her brother before he left on the "midnight."

"If you take that, you will be able to have tea here before you go," she added. "I will get Hubert over; for he will want to say good-by and probably has not the slightest idea that you are running away from us to-day."

"And I will take you to the station in my car," Delane declared.

Efforts to get Rothwell for tea were not successful. He was not at the hotel. The clerk there thought he had gone out on a sailing party but was

not sure just where he was or when he would return. Florence looked a little dubious. She wondered if there were not an earlier train.

"Only a horrid old local that picks up the trippers from Nantasket," Susan explained. "Besides, you want your tea."

They sat on the verandah and watched a big black cloud which was sweeping in from the sea in the form of an immense sector of a circle. It had ragged edges and looked ugly. The water near the shore was very calm and the color of lead. There was a dead stillness in the air and that peculiar feeling that gives one the impression of a world suspended at the bottom of a vacuum. A strange light hung over the clean-cut edge of the horizon. The rolling country to the west was disturbingly distinct, each house and tree and hill standing out like paper silhouettes in an unreal panorama. It was like a land of the dead with no breeze to rustle the trees, no song of birds, and no movement or sound from the great flat expanse of water that lay darkly under the shadow of the approaching storm.

"I hope Hubert's sailing party will return before that cloud bursts over us," Florence said, as she made ready to go.

"There is not a boat in sight," Delane remarked, looking out across the sea.

"He may not be sailing at all," Susan put in cheerfully. "I find that hotel clerks and officials generally are a very unreliable source of informa-

tion. Whether the liberal system of education of which America is so proud or a certain dullness of brain causes this vagueness, is more than I can say. But I do know that scarcely anywhere on the Continent or in England is there such casualness about small things as one finds right here in this country."

"You have the wrong audience if you are going to attack the sacred institutions of our land," Florence interrupted.

"I am not criticizing America," Susan replied quickly. "I love it. Would I stay here so long if I didn't like it? But I often wonder why the rank and file of people consider themselves so infinitely superior to all other races under the sun, when they show such an inaptitude to the little things of life, which are really the only things that make life at all possible. Doesn't a telephone girl nearly always show a surprising degree of inattention to what you are trying to say to her, and soda-fountain clerks ask you twice what drink you want before you get it? Perhaps specializing in the higher branches of science and night schools befuddles the brain and is the explanation of the somnambulant attitude of the proletariat in the daytime."

"You are very amusing," Florence said, as she kissed Susan good-by, "and I would like to stay and explode your arguments. But I know that you never could be convinced that over here we are quite up to the mark of European standards."

"You are way beyond it," Susan answered. "That is the trouble. You have jumped from the

first rung of the ladder to the top, and consequently are a little dazed by it. The European is a perfect child beside you; but at each step of his civilization he has had his feet firmly on the ground. He hasn't skipped."

"Well, if he hasn't, I must," Florence said hurriedly, as she started off with Delane.

The rain was just beginning to fall as they rode down to the station. The sky was very dark, and the sea had been blotted out entirely by the clouds that were rolling in from the east. When they reached the station there was no one there,—not even the ticket clerk or station agent. There was no evidence of an approaching train or of one that had just left. Florence looked at Delane in amazement.

"Have we missed it?" she asked.

"It is more likely that Susan has missed it," Delane replied. "She probably does not understand our time-tables any more than so many other things about us which she fails to grasp."

"I thought you were Susan's champion," Florence interrupted.

"I am, except when she goes on the way she did this afternoon. She ought to know that America is a pretty fine country in spite of everything."

"It was because of Mr. Rothwell," Florence continued. "She knew he hadn't gone sailing and was annoyed when the clerk at the hotel would not throw any light on the subject. But what are we to do if there isn't a train?"

"Oh, I will get you to town all right," Delane said, going into the station.

The schedule on the board was examined, and it was found that Susan's "five-four" ran only on Sundays. The local and earlier train was the only one on week days until a train somewhat late in the evening.

"That evening train will never do," Florence said dolefully. "Max will be gone by that time."

"Don't you worry, my dear lady," Delane said. "Jump into the machine, and I will get you up to town sooner than the train would have done."

"I am sure of that," Florence replied. "Sooner than the train that runs only on Sundays. But how about the storm, and your dashing off to Boston just after you have come down here to visit Susan? Besides, she will be horribly nervous if we are to have a regular tempest."

"I am not worrying about her," Delane laughed. "As for myself, I can get back here to-night."

Florence tried to look cheerful, but she felt anything but that. Delane was driving his own car, a speedy little roadster; and the prospect of a ride with him to town was not altogether to her fancy. On Delane's part, he was only too glad that his big car and chauffeur were not on the scene; for in that case there would have been small excuse for his going along too.

But there seemed nothing else to do but go, if Florence wished to see Max that night. So they were off in the wind and rain; and Delane promised

that he would outride the storm, which now was coming rapidly upon them with all the accompaniment of lightning and thunder. The top of the car was up, the side curtains put on, and everything made as tight as possible for a journey which was bound to be wet. On account of the beating rain, it was hard to see any distance ahead, but they made good time, and Florence was not more than moderately uncomfortable in spite of the almost incessant flashes of lightning. However, she was getting wet and cold, and Delane suggested that they stop for supper at some inn on the road; but Florence said that would only delay them and that she was not hungry.

Then something happened, which of course is to be expected in the best of weather where motors are concerned. Delane got out in the rain and tinkered with the engine. At last he said he knew what was the matter, but that he must stop at the next village and get a garage to fix him up. There was really nothing seriously wrong with the car; but Delane wished to make as much of it as possible, thinking a stop for supper would be pleasant and feeling sure that in spite of the delay he could make town before Kendall left. When Florence was assured of this, she was not at all loath to eat and dry herself a bit; for the storm had pursued them all the way, and the rain was beating in from every side. A mile or two farther on, they came to a brightly lighted house somewhat back from the road, which advertised chicken dinners and made a

speciality of hearty food beneath its modest sign of "tea house."

A big fire was blazing in the dining room, and Delane escorted Florence to a table in the angle of the chimney, which position served to dry them off while the candlelight and glow from the fireplace made them as cozy and comfortable as could be desired. Florence knew perfectly well when she sat down to supper that her companion would become sentimental. The way he leaned toward her across the table, smiling pleasantly all the while, showed clearly what was in his mind. She was hardly prepared, though, for his rather all-embracing remark when he said, "The only time I am really happy is when I am with you."

After which he put out his hand as if to take Florence's, which was resting on the table, and continued, "I hope you don't mind me being quite frank with you. I never had the knack of beating around the bush and saying a lot of things I didn't mean."

"Perhaps frankness is the best way for both of us," Florence replied, withdrawing her hand. "But I thought that day on the beach had settled all this between us. I am sure if you really care for me, you will not bring up this subject again."

"But you ran away from me," Delane persisted; "and I was left not knowing what your state of mind might be."

"A little intuition would have told you."

"A man is not supposed to have any; the women have a monopoly of that article."

"Then using my intuition for want of yours," Florence went on quietly, "I say that I know exactly what is in your mind. My advice is that you eat your supper and stop thinking of me."

"I never could stop thinking about you."

"There is no time like the present for trying."

"Won't you just let me make a confession; tell you one thing?"

"If it isn't too personal, perhaps," Florence answered.

"I have written letters to you, telling you how I feel about you, and then have torn them up for fear they would make you angry, or get into Max's hands."

Florence made no reply. She looked down at her plate, feeling a sudden wave of pity for this man who so evidently was smitten pretty badly by love. What a comedy the whole thing was: her deep regard for some one else and Delane's devotion to her, but all at cross-purposes and coming in each case against a blank wall.

"I'll show you one or two of the letters some day," Delane began again, "if you want to see them. I just couldn't destroy them all because they expressed so well what I feel."

Florence tried to laugh and consider the whole thing as a joke.

"The next thing I know," she said, "you will be publishing them under the title of 'Letters of a Love-sick Youth.'"

This evidently hurt Delane a little. He made no

answer but stared straight at Florence for a moment, finally saying, "I guess you don't understand."

"I only meant," she returned, "that people like to appear in print these days, especially about matters nearest their heart. Come, Jim," she went on, thinking that perhaps a familiar, friendly sort of attitude would serve the quickest to turn his thoughts into another channel, "I am too old not to know my own mind. You know I am not in love with you. How can you expect me to listen to you when you talk in this way?"

The directness of her remarks evidently had their effect upon him. He was silent a long time and scarcely looked up from the table.

At last Florence said, "I wish you would telephone to my house and see if Max is still there."

Delane hurried away to do this; he could get no answer over the line to Boston and consumed several minutes in the men's room, having some rather generous drinks from the flask of a friend whom he ran into and who, like himself, was marooned by the storm. When he came back to the table, his face was a trifle flushed, but he seemed quieter than usual, and Florence thought there was no more danger of his breaking into rhapsodies about herself.

The supper was finished; and a little after seven they were on their way again. The storm had gone on before them, leaving only a spattering of rain and a gusty wind. Delane drove rapidly and said nothing. Florence was beginning to feel quite comfortable, realizing that she would soon be home

with time for a quiet chat with Max before he took his train. They entered Boston through the Fenway and could see all about traces of the storm: branches were lying across the road, sand and dirt were flowing into great pools, and everywhere was that washed-out, dejected look which a city has after being swept clean by torrents of rain. People were scarce upon the streets; a broken umbrella lay in the gutter, and from the upper stories of houses faces looked out to inspect the sky. The sky itself was fitfully lighted by distant flashes, and a few dark clouds hurried over its surface, trying to catch up with the main division of the storm. Like an army that has passed through a country, the tempest leaves its marks of grimness.

There were no lights in the Kendall house as Florence and Delane went up the steps. In the vestibule she turned the electric switch; but no light was forthcoming. Delane, stepping into the hall, struck a match. Florence called out, "Max, Max! Are you here?" Delane's match went out; she advanced a few steps into the living room; the front door closed behind her, and utter darkness reigned.

CHAPTER XIV

Florence was not at all sure, as she groped about in the blackness of the room, whether Delane had come in behind her or was waiting outside. There was something terrifying in the silence and darkness. She tried to find the electric light in the living room, and stumbling against a chair, heard what sounded like a book fall heavily to the floor. Then Delane's voice came from the far end of the room.

"I guess the storm has put the lights on the blink," he said.

"Wait a moment," she answered, and hurried into the dining room to fetch the candelabra. There were only two candles in this which she could light; she came back into the front room and asked Delane for a match. He came toward her, knocking against something on the way; and then she saw the flame of his match. He lighted the candles and placed them on a table by the wall. They were just below a large oil painting of Florence's father and showed up the features of his face in a very effective manner. The picture seemed like one of the old masters from the high light which the candle threw upon the face. The portrait was, in fact, the only thing in the room that could be seen at all

clearly, and the splendid old gentleman dominated the scene.

"That's a grand picture," Delane said. "Of your father, I suppose."

"Yes," Florence murmured in reply.

The two flickering flames were not sufficient to illuminate the big room; and Florence was aware of the long shadow of her companion, thrown in a huge mass against the wall and ceiling. It seemed to hang over her and the entire apartment.

"I must see if anything has happened to Max," Florence said, and started out of the room with the candles, leaving Delane in darkness again.

She went upstairs and into Max's room. There, by the dim light, she saw that his bag and the dispatch box which he always carried on his business trips were gone. Max had left a note for his sister on the table in the hall, telling her that he was starting on an earlier train than he had expected to take; but of course Florence did not discover this in the darkness. She wished she could speak with Susan, to have communication with the outside world, now that she found herself alone in the house with Delane. It was certainly awkward that he should have come in with her. Yet she realized that if it had been a question of Rothwell, she would have been extremely annoyed if he had not come in,—leaving her to enter the dark house alone. She was not exactly afraid, but she was distinctly uncomfortable. She heard a door open and close downstairs. What could Delane be doing? She

felt she must talk with Susan; to say that she had arrived home all right and find out how her friend had come through the storm. The telephone extension was in her room. She picked up the receiver and sat waiting in the light of the candles for an answer. There was no response. Repeated attempts to get "Central" were of no avail. The lightning and wind undoubtedly had upset the telephone system as it had the lights. For a moment Florence was really frightened. With no lights, no telephone, to be alone with Delane in this great house made her uneasy. Of course she could call downstairs to him, say good night, and retire to her room and go to bed, leaving the gentleman below to make his exit when he would. But this seemed very unsportsmanlike, especially since he had brought her to town and was cold and wet like herself. She took up the candelabra again and went down to the living room. She could see the spot of Delane's cigarette, as he sat in the corner, smoking.

"I thought you were not coming back," he said, getting up as she came into the room.

"I was almost minded not to," Florence replied; "for I am really very tired, as I am sure you are. I shall go straight to bed after giving you something to eat,—that is, if there is anything to eat in the house. You see we have had no maids this summer and have been getting our meals out most of the time."

"Aren't you afraid to stay alone in this big house?" Delane said, after a moment.

"It is not the first time I have been here alone at night. Max is away occasionally."

Delane sat down and lighted another cigarette.

It occurred to Florence that it might be difficult to get rid of him. He was making himself comfortable in the big chair and gave no indication of leaving. She had proposed something to eat, as a man is likely to terminate a visit after he has been fed.

"You might light the fire, if you are cold," Florence said, "and I will see what I can produce in the way of food."

"Please don't bother on my account," Delane replied. "But I will make a fire, for I know you must be cold after the ride."

While he was busy getting the logs to burn, Florence went out to the pantry and was able to extract from a rather empty cupboard a box of sardines and some plain crackers. She brought these things into the dining room and told Delane to come out and help himself. A cup of tea would have tasted very good to her; but she knew it would take some time to boil the water, and her main idea was to get the improvised luncheon over as soon as possible and see the last of her companion.

"There is a bottle of supposedly Canadian Club whisky in the sideboard, if you want to take a chance on it," she said, as she came back from the pantry.

"A drop to warm me up will do the business in first-rate style," Delane said, as he took out the bot-

tle and poured himself a decidedly liberal "drop."

"I can't vouch for it," Florence went on; "but if it hasn't killed Max, I guess you will survive."

The one source of light was placed in the middle of the dining-room table; and Florence and her companion sat down to a very frugal repast, made somewhat better for Delane by his drink of whisky. They munched crackers and said nothing. Delane's silence was becoming rather trying to Florence, although she much preferred to have him that way than in a too talkative mood. How irritating the whole thing really was, she thought. A tête-à-tête has such infinite possibilities but is so dreadful with the wrong person.

"It was awfully good of you to bring me to town in this storm," Florence said. "And I want to thank you. I must say good night, though, very soon."

"It isn't late," Delane remarked.

"Not very late," Florence replied, "but you must remember that we have had a hard ride. I should think you would be tired yourself."

"No, I am not tired. I am never tired when I am with you."

There was a pause in which Delane took a few more drinks from his glass.

"I wish you liked me. I wish you could feel the way I do."

He got up and poured himself another glass of whisky and then sat down again opposite to Florence.

"I shall have no desire to feel as you do if you take any more of that moonshine bottled in bond," she declared, trying to be facetious when she felt decidedly otherwise. "Please don't drink any more."

"Just this one," Delane answered. "Drink never affects me."

There was a long silence while he sat looking at Florence across the table. His gaze seemed to destroy her; to absorb her whole being and make her shrink within herself. The same feeling of alarm came over her which she had experienced when alone upstairs. She had seen cats look at people the way Delane was looking at her now. Florence had never liked cats; perhaps that was why she did not like this man.

"I could sit here and talk to you all night," he said. "I could just sit here and look at you and be perfectly happy."

"Perhaps you could," Florence was quick to interrupt; "but I think you won't."

She made a movement to leave the room, when she was suddenly aware that Delane had arisen and was standing directly in front of her and very close.

"You talk about the lower classes; you work among them," he was saying; "but why can't you have a little compassion for me? Why must you reckon me so out of your world that you set yourself against me and torment me, and make me wild with

the thought that you are so far above me that I may never have your love?"

"What you are saying is absurd," Florence answered hastily. "I never considered you other than as the friend of my brother, the man who has done so much for him. I have great admiration for you, but I don't love you and never can. Please don't make me say this to you again and again. It will make our seeing each other very hard."

"I could make you happy. What more do you want?"

"A great many women ask nothing more; they do not even know the meaning of love when they marry. But I am not like that; nothing could ever make me want to be. Besides," she added, "I am happy as I am."

"Does deep and lifelong devotion mean nothing to you?"

"I can't listen to you when you talk this way."

"I will make you listen to me; I will make you love me."

"Is there anything more I can get for you?" she asked, not knowing what he was going to say or do next and feeling that the sooner she got away from him the better.

"I don't want anything—"

"Then I must leave you."

"I don't want anything—but you!" Delane gasped hurriedly.

He took a step nearer to Florence, almost pres-

sing her against the table. He was speaking very quickly, with his face close to hers.

"Since knowing you, I have never wanted anything else. I have never thought of anything else or anybody but you. The image of you is in my heart; your beauty haunts me and drives me mad. I talked some fine language to you down there at the shore last summer; but I didn't say half the things I wanted to. Now you must hear me; must know what I feel."

"Mr. Delane—let me go; I won't listen to you," Florence said, trying to get away from him. But he was holding her back against the table, and she could not move.

"Last summer I didn't have the courage to tell you everything," he went on. "I knew you were a lady, that you were Max's sister, and I wanted to be as decent as I could. But you gave no heed to me; you acted as if you were frightened. Now I am past fear of frightening or hurting you. I only love you madly, wildly—call it anything you will; but hear me out. I can't go on the way I have been, feeling about you as I do."

In this last there was the cry of a tortured animal, of some one on the rack of suffering; and it sent a cold thrill through Florence. In a flash she knew the sort of situation she had to deal with, to save herself from which would require all her strength. How she hated and loathed the man for his brutality and lack of decency. She pushed past him and

stepped out into the room. But he seized her hand and drew her back.

"Look here!" she cried, "We will have no hysterics. You have been drinking and don't know what you are saying. Let me save you before you forget yourself beyond all reason."

"I want to forget," Delane continued more hurriedly. "I don't care what you think of me after to-night. I only want you to know that I am dead serious; that you can't turn me aside and consider me a poor lovesick wretch who is the victim of your beauty. Do you think that I have only been flirting with you? That I have only cared for you a little? Don't you know that I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and that such love as mine cannot go on forever in this blind way? Seeing you and being with you to-day have driven me mad. Call it madness if you will. Love is madness; anything that consumes the very soul and drives every thought away but the one thought and desire for you is madness. I don't deny it. But say that you will love me; that you will have me. Why is one man so different from another? Why can't you love me as well as some one else? Surely you are human; surely what I feel must awaken something in you. What is the matter with me? Tell me that."

"Let go my hand!" Florence almost screamed, trying to get away from him. "I won't let you say these things to me. Please have some regard

for me on account of Max. What would he say if he knew how you are behaving?"

She pulled away suddenly and stepped into the living room, which was in total darkness. Delane was quick to follow and was speaking again in a husky voice, straight into her face.

"I don't care what Max thinks. He has never been in love. I don't care what you think. You were bound to find out some time or other. I couldn't go on forever smiling and dancing attendance on you while this thing was in my heart. There are times when a person is willing to give up his life for just one thing,—for a kiss from the woman he loves. Let me have that kiss and leave you, then I shall know what it is to be happy. I love you. All your scruples and all your fears cannot stop that love. Tell the sun to stop shining; tell me to stop loving you; it is all the same."

He had seized her hand again and, almost embracing her, was drawing her over toward the fireplace, where there was a faint glow from the hearth. Florence made a movement as if to strike him. Suddenly he seized her in his arms; and pressing her down upon the sofa which was in front of the fireplace, he kissed her wildly, holding her so close in his embrace that she could make no effort to get away and stifling every cry by the passion of his kisses.

It was horrible; horrible to Florence and horrible to Delane, who knew somewhere deep in his subconscious self that he had done the unforgivable

thing and had killed any possible regard she might ever have had for him. One of those supreme moments when the soul is annihilated by the fire of the eternal animal of which man's physical self is made. What an irony there is in the fact that the heights to which a great love brings the spirit can be rendered into the very dust by the passion which springs from that love. The soul through love comes to dwell on a kind of higher plane of the senses, where life is quickened and made more beautiful; and then, a certain ultimate point having been reached, the power of the flesh, which denies and destroys, hurls all the perfect structure into the abyss. The prince becomes a pauper; the man, a brute; and the fine thoughts, a maelstrom of passion. Through the soul in its development to the perfect love comes the realization of the senses; and because man falls, through the sensual experience comes the destruction of the spirit. But then from that fall and that knowledge he rises again to the heights with his gaze ever fixed on the stars. But Delane did not know this. Like nearly all poor mortals, his gaze was earthward. To the earth he had dragged and debased his love, and there it must lie.

At last there was a frantic struggle on Florence's part. She freed her arms, and almost hurling Delane from her, was able to get to her feet, staggering and feeling that in a moment she would collapse.

"Now go, go!" she managed to say. "I never want to see you again. Never come into my house; never speak to me. I hate you, I hate you!"

She felt her way uncertainly across the room, trying to find the door.

"What about Max? What about Greenvale?" Delane asked, letting himself sink heavily on to the sofa, with his head in his hand, and pushing back his hair like a man dazed.

"What about your work and all your social theories?" he went on, not knowing what he was saying. "You are only a proud aristocrat, after all, and you consider yourself disgraced because a real man has made love to you."

"Love! You call that love!" Florence gasped, as she braced herself against a chair by the door. She thought she was going to faint. "Please go," she murmured, sinking into the chair, but still keeping her senses.

Delane gave no heed. "You like to think you are one of the people; you like to mix with the underworld to relieve the monotony of your stupid, conventional life. You send prostitutes into the country, thinking you can reform them by a little fresh air." He laughed like a man crazy. "You bring me into your wild scheme for these girls, and you are nice to me because I can be of use; but all the while you hate me and consider me outside your circle. Oh, I know your ways. Have you ever called on my sister? Have you ever asked her to your home? Haven't you always felt uncomfortable when I was around, for fear I would do or say the wrong thing? Well, I have done it now. You know you were right,—that may be some

satisfaction to you; and I know damned well I have been a fool. I was an idiot to have loved you; but, good God, how could I help that!"

Florence started up again. She knew she would scream if he did not leave her. She felt dizzy and could hardly walk.

"Go, go; I beg of you," she said huskily.

"Yes; I am going," Delane said, moving across the room. "You have nothing to be afraid of. Call me a knave, anything you like. I am out of your class. To-night has settled it. Have done with me; I have shown you what I am. What does your brother want of my dirty money? I have insulted his sister. Tell him all about it,—I have nothing to fear from him. But I will put your prostitutes out of Greenvale. I won't have a respectable suburb frequented by people like that. I have got my way to make in the world. It isn't all fixed for me as yours is. You can step into your slums and out again to your home in Marlborough Street; but I won't have your slum proposition foisted upon Greenvale. You might as well know that now."

He had gone as far as the door. Florence had managed to drag herself into the dining room where she was trying to find some brandy in the cupboard. She was terrified lest she should fall senseless before Delane should leave the house.

Getting his hat and coat in the darkness, he finally passed out into the vestibule, and Florence heard the front door close behind him. She had a strange

feeling then that he had not really gone. She began to tremble violently, and cold chills of terror ran through her. With a little cry she fell in a heap on the dining-room floor. But Delane did not hear that cry. He was outside, starting his motor and cursing the gods that made him.

CHAPTER XV

The failure of Delane to return after presumably leaving Florence at the station had caused Susan some little uneasiness. Of course the storm was very bad, and he might have met with a mishap; but in that case she certainly would have heard of it. Having expected him back within half an hour, it was difficult to find an explanation for the non-appearance of her guest. Rothwell, who had come in to steady Susan's nerves during the worst part of the thunder and lightning, saw nothing unusual in the situation. He said that Delane probably had gone on to town with Florence.

"It is hardly likely that she would let him," Susan retorted, "considering her dislike of him; and I don't think any one would have attempted to motor up to town in the midst of such a storm." After a moment she added, "Now if you had been there, things might have been different. You are a great goose not to pay more definite attention to Florence. Where will you find a woman her equal?"

"I was thinking that the other day," Rothwell said, in a very quiet sort of tone.

"Good Lord," Susan laughed. "What will just thinking accomplish!"

"It is odd, though, that they did not telephone,"

Hubert went on, evidently wishing to change the subject from a discussion of himself in his relation to Mrs. Wainwright.

"I would not have answered the 'phone if they had. It is very dangerous during an electrical storm."

It was now late in the evening, and Rothwell was just about to go back to his hotel. He realized Susan's nervousness and uncertainty about her friends and said he would call up Boston to see if Florence had arrived home all right. About the time that he was told by the local operator that all the lines were down, Florence was just regaining her senses, after having fainted when Delane left her.

Locking herself in her room, she managed to get to bed, where she lay for hours staring vacantly into the night, wondering if it were really herself who had been through that terrible scene. It all seemed too dreadful and too remote from anything she could have imagined as happening to her. She had read of such things,—of brutal men attacking defenceless women and making them succumb to their passion. Of course, what had occurred was not so bad as that; but her soul seemed as utterly destroyed by the strength of Delane's embrace and the madness of his kisses as it would have been if she had passed through the ordeal of some more unspeakable experience. She wondered if she could ever forget it; if the terror of that night would ever be wiped off her mind. Terrible things have a way of leaving a very deep and lasting imprint upon the

soul. It is as though the tragic were written with indelible ink, while the pleasant and happy episodes of life are sketched lightly upon the fancy like a Japanese water drawing, having all the charm and elusiveness of those impressions. She seemed to have grown suddenly old within a few hours. The world had become very terrible to her.

It was after midnight when she tried again to reach Susan over the telephone. There was no reply, and she knew she must wait until morning before getting in touch with the outside world. "The outside world." That was the way everything seemed to her now. The unexpectedness and horror of the scene through which she had just passed; the darkness of the house and the flickering candle light against which Delane's figure had appeared so large and terrifying to her, made it all like a nightmare, a memory, a dream which would always haunt her and which she could never share with any one. Of that she was very sure. As she lay staring into the blackness of her room, this thought had been always with her,—that no one could ever know.

There was the outside world, the world of activity in her work; Max's world in relation to his business and to Delane; and the smaller circle of Rothwell and Susan, who at the present moment seemed to play a very small part in her affairs. In all her points of contact with these different spheres, there never could be a hint or suggestion of what had occurred between Delane and herself. She

feared what Max would do if he knew. She was too proud and happy in her Greenvale experiment to allow that to be destroyed by Delane, if there should be a falling out between him and her brother. It would be her memory of this awful night against all these outside interests. It would be hard, she knew, to keep her secret in the face of having to see Delane occasionally, as was bound to happen. That he would talk and go to Max as the repudiated lover, as the man who had it on his conscience that he had insulted Kendall's sister and brutally forced himself upon her, was beyond any likelihood. Florence understood him too well to fear what he might do. Delane only talked when he was successful; his personality seemed to have existence only when things went his way. He would never admit defeat, either in a matter of love or of business.

Florence did not know much about the details of the Greenvale affairs, but she was perfectly well aware that Delane held the upper hand financially. Like all newly made men however, he was afraid of scandal and would not be likely to throw Kendall down and have it published broadcast why there had been a break in their relations. On the other hand, Kendall was the sort that would give up the whole enterprise and ruin himself into the bargain if his sister's honor were at stake. That was why Florence knew she must be silent; why her secret must be forever shut away from the outside world. She must be silent to save herself, but more impor-

tant a thousand times than that, to save her brother's career. This was the thought which was constantly in her mind.

It seemed impossible that life would ever have quite the same joy for her, the same fresh outlook. When Delane seized her roughly he had hurt her hands, her body had been crushed; but it was her spirit which really suffered. Her husband's death had made her feel that life had stopped for her; that she had ceased to live in a world which went on just the same. But it had not made her feel old. This last episode had seemed to shrink and shrivel her soul, so that in the morning she was almost afraid to get up and look at herself in the mirror. When the morning did come, Florence had a sensation of weakness and sickness so that she was not at all sure whether she would be able to go about her duties for the day.

The committee meeting of her settlement house was scheduled for ten o'clock. Before she started for it she was able to get Susan's house over the telephone and was told by the maid that Miss Anderton had gone to Boston for the day. That seemed very odd, Florence thought, as Susan had distinctly told her she was not going to town again until she packed herself off for the winter. Probably Delane had not gone back to the shore the night before, and Susan scented trouble. At any rate, she would certainly come to the house as soon as she arrived in town, and Florence knew how guarded she would have to be with her friend. Perhaps the

committee meeting would be the best place for her, both for the purpose of avoiding Susan and taking her mind off herself. She got up so late that she had just time to make it and went out feeling very ill indeed. She hoped that when she got into the fresh air and saw her associates of the Trumbull Square House she would feel better.

Only a few people were there, as three ladies of the committee had not been able to leave their pressing summer duties to come to town to devise ways and means for the winter work. After a brief consultation as to the funds which would be necessary for the new work to be undertaken, and after going over the expenses of the preceding season, Mrs. Montgomery Johnson, a lady whom Florence scarcely knew, proposed that Mrs. Wainwright should prepare a paper on her activities in Greenvale, as she and several of her friends had heard of what Mrs. Wainwright was doing with her house for "fallen girls," as she expressed it, in Boston's newest suburb.

"We think it awfully interesting, but a rather dangerous venture," Mrs. Johnson went on; "and we would like to have a paper on the subject read at our next open meeting."

"Oh, really," Florence said, from her place near the center of the room, "what I am trying to do with a few girls in Greenvale is entirely my own personal affair and is in no way connected with the Trumbull Square House work. It would be most difficult for me and for all of us if it should be

considered so; and I am sure I did not expect that you would even hear of it."

She had been most careful throughout in her efforts on behalf of Gracie and Tommy, that whatever she did for them should be quite apart from her regular work in the slums. It was very evident to her, as it would be to any one, why this should be necessary. The Trumbull Square House was a well-known institution, and it would be most hurtful if it should become a matter of common talk that the House was sponsor for the sort of thing which Florence had undertaken. The scope of this, really so slight in so far as it had any bearing on the general public, would be misinterpreted if talked about and exploited.

"How many girls have you now at your house in the country?" Mrs. Johnson asked.

"If you don't mind, I would rather not talk about it," Florence replied. "I was able to place two unfortunate girls with an elderly woman to look after them in one of my brother's flats in Greenvale. That is about all there is to it; and, as you will understand, that is hardly a matter about which I could read a paper, even if I cared to do so."

She hoped that this rather general statement would stop any further discussion of her interests in Greenvale. It was odd, she thought, that anything should have been said about it this morning, —especially after what Delane had thrown out the night before in reference to the fate of the girls. Florence had felt then that his remark was merely

the angry outburst of a drunken man; but she was inclined to consider it more seriously, as a result of Mrs. Johnson's inquiries. Florence reasoned that there was really nothing Delane could do to upset her plans. Susan held the lease of the flat where Mrs. Potter and the girls were installed. Delane could do nothing to interfere on that score. That he should find some cause for complaint of the girls seemed hardly likely, as Florence had every reason to believe they were behaving themselves; and the longer they stayed in Greenvale, the easier it would be to manage them. However, in view of Delane's threat and of what Mrs. Johnson had just said, she thought it might be advisable to get them out of Greenvale within the next month or so and place them permanently in work of some sort, as she had intended doing from the first. Above all, she did not wish any publicity in connection with her plan for Gracie and Tommy, and the fact that it was being talked about at this committee meeting was decidedly distasteful to her.

The morning dragged on wearily, with much idle talk, many figures, and long pauses. There was much scribbling and jotting down of notes; suggestions made and counter-suggestions, and a somewhat long consultation over the debit and credit columns of the books of the House. Florence had not been at all well when she came into the committee room; but now she was feeling positively ill and knew she must get home as soon as possible. Just as she was about to leave, Miss Roper, the executive

head of Trumbull Square affairs, took her aside and asked if there was any truth in the statement that she was running a house somewhere in the country for fallen girls.

"Because," Miss Roper went on, "you know that is a subject into which we are putting a great deal of study, not only here but in other cities; and if you are doing anything yourself in the investigation of this particular matter, we should like to have the benefit of it. Of course this House as an organization must be very careful that its name is not connected with any mere experiment. This you will perceive yourself; and I would like to ask you as a favor if you will be very careful that nothing is known of what you are doing. Your connection with our work here would lead people to believe that the venture in Greenvale was part of our scheme in social service endeavors. To deal effectively and properly with the fallen girl is an extremely difficult problem; and the Trumbull Square House will not be able to undertake anything in that direction until the final and full reports of the Chicago and New York committees have been made."

"I am aware of all that," Florence said, wondering if the stream of Miss Roper's talk would ever end. It was the sort of thing she had heard so often: the very thing that had made her take Gracie and Tommy into the country to see what she could do for them by the application of a little plain humanity. She felt now, more strongly than ever, that final reports of committees and investigation of special sub-

jects went a very little way toward reforming character. Character was at the base of the whole matter, and poor relief and social service work must aim to construct that as the foundation for any effort they would make.

She really could not stay any longer in the overheated room; so telling Miss Roper that she would act with the greatest discretion, she made her adieux and started home. Florence would have liked a bite of luncheon, a little air and a good walk; but she felt too ill for any of these things. She found a note under her door announcing that Miss Anderton would return at one o'clock. This was a great relief to her, for she was becoming somewhat alarmed by her growing feeling of sickness and the thought that she would be alone in the house if anything happened to her. She threw herself down on her bed to await Susan's arrival. When the bell finally rang, Florence was hardly able to get downstairs to open the door; and Susan was horrified to see her friend looking so pale and haggard.

"I knew something had happened to you," was the first thing she said. "Come upstairs at once and let me put you to bed. Have you had anything to eat; where did you get your breakfast; and why couldn't I get into the house when I called this morning?" Susan went on rapidly. "When I did not hear from you last night, and Delane telephoned early this morning that he was not coming back and asked me to send his bag to town by express, I decided to put on my hat and appear on the scene at

once. I am very glad I did; although I had no idea you were ill, my dear. Tell me all about it."

"There is nothing to tell," Florence said weakly. "The ride was too much for me; I caught cold, and this morning when I really should have stayed in bed, I had to go out to my committee meeting. It was there I began to feel ill."

"So you motored all the way to town?" Susan asked.

"Yes; it was all because of your wretched train which did not run. I thought I must get here before Max left, and Delane said he would bring me up. We had a horrible ride. I think I never was so cold; and it simply poured all the way."

"You were not dressed for it, and in an open car, —a very poor arrangement," Susan said in her most matter-of-fact manner. "Max must have been surprised to see you walking in out of the storm," she added, after a moment.

"But Max had gone," Florence replied.

"What a pity. And Delane?"

"He went to his club for the night, I suppose."

As Susan sat holding Florence's hand, she realized that her friend was in a high fever; and that something decisive must be done at once.

"I shall fetch a doctor and a nurse," she said, suddenly getting up.

"It seems rather absurd," Florence murmured.

"I will certainly be all right to-morrow."

"Never mind about to-morrow. Who's your doctor?"

"Our regular physician is out of town; but Otis is all right,—Mortimer Otis, who has just graduated from the medical school. It will buck him up a bit to have a patient."

"Then I will telephone him now and also have some lunch sent in to you."

Like an old general who is called back to service in an emergency, Susan was never so effectively herself as when, in a situation of difficulty, she could muster and direct the forces at her command. She was able to reach Otis at his house, and the young physician said he would come over immediately. In which case Susan thought she would not go out until he arrived, not wishing to leave her patient alone even for a moment. She proposed that she should go downstairs and get something for Florence to eat; at which Florence quickly sat up in bed and said she did not want anything to eat; that the mere idea of food nauseated her.

"Besides," she went on eagerly, leaning over toward Susan, "there is absolutely nothing in the house that you could get me."

She looked very strange and seemed excited.

"You will find in the dining room the remains of what I was able to get hold of last night,—a few crackers and a box of sardines. I was rather hungry. Delane came in for a moment, and we had something to eat." She looked about nervously. "I know there is nothing else, because I tried to find something this morning."

This was really not so at all, as Florence had

hurried out of the house without even looking into the rooms on the lower floor. They held an evil memory for her. She would never be able to disassociate them from the blackness of that night. She had thought of the disorder of the dining-room table and wished to offer Susan some explanation of it before she should see it for herself. What she had quite failed to realize was that there was a considerable amount of disorder in the living room, unobserved by her in the darkness of the night before. Also, that the bottle from which Delane had so copiously imbibed was still standing on the table where he had left it.

"Then I will go out and fetch some food as soon as Otis gets here," Susan replied, rather dismayed by her friend's sudden excitability.

"Oh, that is all right,—that's all right," Florence said, sinking back on her pillow. "I don't want anything; the doctor will probably say that I am not to have anything."

"At any rate," Susan continued, "I shall make an investigation of your pantry. I am sure I can at least find some tea."

"No, I can't take anything," Florence exclaimed, seizing Susan's hand and detaining her. "Don't leave me; don't go downstairs." And turning her face away, she began to cry.

"This is very odd," Susan thought. Every moment she was more mystified. It was not like Florence to be hysterical, to suffer from nerves. She was one of the calmest people Susan had ever

known. That was one of the reasons why she had been so successful in her work, carried on often in situations requiring the greatest nerve. Susan did not know what to say. She tried to soothe and comfort her friend and told her that she probably would not be very sick but that she would send for Max, if that would make her feel more comfortable.

"No, indeed, don't send for Max," Florence almost wailed. "He would only be alarmed, and he has important business to attend to in New York."

"Where is he staying?"

"It's in the note, there on my table."

It was the note Max had left for his sister, and which she had found that morning when she went out. Susan picked it up and read that Max would be at the Prince George Hotel while in New York. She felt rather easier after having gained this piece of information, for she certainly would send for Kendall, regardless of Florence's wishes, if she thought the occasion warranted it.

Shortly after this Otis came in. He made an examination, found a very high temperature, indications of hysteria, and pronounced the case to be one of threatened pneumonia. Allowing for the youth of the physician, Susan interpreted this as a very bad cold. She had known members of the medical profession before who always found symptoms of pneumonia and thereupon pulled their patients through marvelously to recovery. However, it was

evident to any one that Florence was seriously ill; and Susan made arrangements with Otis to have a nurse sent in at once. She would bring her own maid up from the shore to look after the house. Then she slipped quietly downstairs.

As she descended to the lower hallway, she was perfectly well aware that there was something more behind Florence's condition than a ride to Boston in the rain and a rather tiring committee meeting could have caused. What that something was she had no way of finding out,—at least, not for the present. To see that Florence was properly taken care of was her immediate object. However, as she glanced down the lower hall, the dining-room table as seen through the doorway arrested her attention. The two doors into the living room were closed; but she had a straight view into the room beyond. The bottle of whisky and the disordered remains of the luncheon were all there upon the table, as they had been left the night before; but now with that added effect of complete demoralization which daylight always brings to such a scene.

Susan stopped short and then proceeded to enter the room for a closer inspection. The chairs were in a rather curious position, she thought; one of them evidently having been pushed away hurriedly from the table, as it was facing the wall with its back toward the room. Susan hit with her shoe the glass stopper of the decanter which Florence was taking out of the cupboard just as she

fainted. She picked it up and put it back where it belonged. There were cigarette ashes strewn about the table and also on the rug. Something about the disorder of the place and the bottle of spirits on the table made her grow suddenly cold with a curious feeling of alarm. It was not the sort of scene in which she could picture Florence under any conditions. She turned and saw that the door into the living room was wide open. She hurried in there.

The first thing that caught her eye was one of the small chairs overturned and a book lying on the floor. She moved slowly across the room and came to the fireplace and sofa. Two of the sofa pillows, looking very much tossed about, were on the floor; the other one, still in its place, was crushed as though some one had been lying on it. There were spots of candle wax on the small table below the portrait of Mr. Kendall. Also, cigarette ashes and more spots of candle wax here and there upon the floor. Susan stood in the middle of the room, utterly dismayed. She could in no way, however remotely, connect Florence with the appearance of this room as she found it. What was the explanation? Then she saw a small black-leather cardcase lying on the floor near the sofa. She reached down and picked it up. It was Delane's. Several of his cards were in it. Susan slipped it into her dress and stood a moment in the midst of the general disorder, thinking.

Without speaking to her friend upstairs, she went

quickly out of the house. Hurrying to the nearest hotel, she sent the following telegram:

Mr. Max Kendall, Prince George Hotel, New York City. Florence ill. Not serious, but please come as soon as possible.

ANDERTON.

CHAPTER XVI

The next few days were busy ones for Susan. She closed her cottage at the shore, brought her maid up to town to run the Kendall house, and in general looked out for Florence and everything connected with her. Florence did not have pneumonia; but a very bad cold developed, combined with attacks of hysteria which rather puzzled the young Doctor Otis. Max, upon receiving Susan's wire, had telephoned home late that afternoon. Finding that his sister's condition was in no way alarming, he said he would not return for a couple of days unless it was absolutely necessary, as it would take him that time to arrange his business affairs in New York so that he could leave. He tried to get Delane at the Boston office to see if he would come over to New York to take his place; but Delane could not be found. The head man at the office reported he had not put in an appearance for two days. It was supposed that he was at the shore visiting Miss Anderton, as he had given that forwarding address for his mail. Susan had very little time to think of Delane or to wonder where he was. However, one or two attempts on her part to get him by telephone were without result.

She said one morning to Florence that Delane

could not be found, to which her friend made no reply. There was certainly something curious in the whole business. Susan did not like mysteries unless she herself could be on the inside of the mystery. It was especially annoying at this time, when she needed all her attention for the details connected with Florence's illness. But things of which she had only a vague knowledge always haunted her, try as she would to put them out of her mind. One day she interviewed Doctor Otis and asked him what he thought the symptoms of hysteria in Florence meant. She would suddenly burst out crying; she stayed awake at night and insisted that she did not wish to be left alone. Often in her sleep she would moan, "Let me go, let me go," "The light, the light—I must have light," all of which was strange and unusual for a patient suffering merely from a cold.

"What do you make of it?" she said to Otis.

"I think Mrs. Wainwright has had a sudden fright; has been terrified by something," he replied. "It is probably some experience she has had in the parts of town where she works,—some man has frightened her, or perhaps tried to attack her when she was investigating a case. Husbands are often not any too willing to have their homes invaded by charitably inclined persons. Of course the cold itself is nothing more than what she has often had; the sort of thing one is likely to contract in the autumn."

"I am perfectly sure there is something behind it

all," Susan went on. "I know certain things which make me think this. I can say nothing definite to you or to any one at present; but I would advise you, if one may use the word advise to a doctor, to treat Mrs. Wainwright primarily for hysteria and let the cold take care of itself."

"It might be well to have in Doctor Randlett, the nerve specialist," Otis said, after thinking a moment. "I will see if he is in town."

"Your specialists are all very well," Susan remarked; "but I hardly think a specialist will be able to discover the cause of this particular case."

Otis went away somewhat mystified himself and thinking Miss Anderton a most extraordinary sort of person.

On the third day Kendall arrived from New York. Upon seeing him, Florence had the worst attack of hysteria she had experienced at all. She cried and begged Max not to do anything, to say nothing. Inquiries as to what he should say nothing about brought no information, and neither Kendall nor the nurse could make out what Florence was talking about.

Susan had taken possession of her old rooms in the third story where she stayed when she first came to Boston as Florence's guest. She was literally on top of the Marlborough Street ménage, directing the servants, the nurse, and even making attempts upon the doctor, as we have just seen. On the day Max arrived home, she was sitting with him after dinner in the living room, and she hinted to him that there

was something behind Florence's condition about which they did not know.

"In my opinion, it is plainly a case of overwork," Max replied.

"How can you call it overwork?" Susan asked, "when your sister has had so little to do all summer. Looking after her girls in Greenvale has certainly not caused her much trouble, or worry either. And in the summer months her duties at the settlement house are very slight. The actual work there really only began the day she was taken sick. It was at the first committee meeting that she began to feel so ill."

"I mean her exertions of the past year or so," Kendall explained. "The effects of that sort of thing are usually not felt at once."

"And not quite in this way," Susan put in.

"All the women to-day take too much upon themselves," Max went on. "I think that is why so many men do not get married. They know that they will see very little of their wives, even if they decide to settle down and have a home. I am sure I can see very little attraction in the thing, if your wife is to spend all her time playing bridge or dashing about doing welfare work. Very often the husband is more of a home body than the wife."

It was quite evident that he did not regard his sister's illness as anything about which to become unduly alarmed. He was the sort of person who is always able to reckon the result of a thing from the special causes that he may have in his own mind.

That of course is a very easy way to get through life, but it is likely to lead to surprises.

Susan was not sure just how far she should go, having so little information herself as to what took place in the Kendall home on the night of the storm. That something took place she was perfectly certain. The rooms as she found them the following morning testified to this much. And then Florence had admitted to her, when she was trying to explain to Susan the appearance of the dining room and the finding of the decanter of brandy half removed from the cupboard, that she had fainted when she reached home after the ride to Boston in the rain. But the fainting business only furnished Susan with another enigma; for she had never known her friend to faint. She remembered that even when it was her trying duty to announce Jack Wainwright's death, Florence had been calm and steady, with wonderful courage.

After a moment, Susan said to Kendall, "Have you seen Delane since you got back?"

"No," he said. "He was not at the office to-day; but he called up from somewhere in the country."

"Did he say where he was?"

"I don't think he did. Merely said he would be in to-morrow and asked to have his mail held for him."

"I suppose you did not talk with him, and that he has no idea Florence is ill," Susan put in.

"How should he?"

"I was only wondering why he has not called up the house to find out how Florence is feeling after the rather trying journey they had together."

"Journey together. What do you mean?" Max asked.

"Didn't you know that he brought her up to town in his motor the night of the terrible storm?"

Max made no answer. Something flashed across his mind which Florence had said to him. When she asked him if Delane ever talked about her, she had also asked her brother if he would wish her to reciprocate Delane's attentions to her. The conversation they had a few weeks before all came back vividly to him. He had never been able to understand the query his sister made, unless it had been merely to try out how far his personal regard for his partner in business went, and whether his attitude toward him as a friend should include a similar tone in Florence. The close way in which Susan sat looking at him now, and her mention of Delane and his ride to town with Florence, all seemed to point to the fact that she knew something which he did not; that perhaps she had some information which she would like to share with him, but was not at all sure just how she should go about it. It is very likely that the attitude of suspicion which Max had always felt in respect to Susan and the feeling that there was a double purpose in nearly everything she said or did caused him to see something behind her present remarks. The way she spoke, the way she looked at him, made him slightly uneasy.

"I knew nothing of the ride," he said at last. "Since my arrival to-day, I have not been able to talk with Florence. She appeared so upset upon see-

ing me that I thought it was best for her to remain perfectly quiet. The nurse merely told me that she had taken a severe cold on the night of the storm."

"It seems that Florence missed her train," Susan went on; "Delane, who had taken her to the station, offered to bring her all the way to town. Of course she accepted because she wished to get here before you left; but it must have been a miserable ride, and she is suffering for it now."

Susan wanted immensely to go on and tell Kendall of the disordered rooms which she had found and of what she suspected as to a scene between Florence and Delane; but she distinctly felt it her duty toward her friend to say nothing of this. She felt sure Max ought to know if anything unpleasant had happened to his sister; but with Florence in her present condition, it hardly seemed her place to say anything definite, even if definite facts had been at hand. That was the whole trouble,—that she knew nothing for certain. That was why she would like to see Delane and incidentally present him with the cardcase she had picked up.

When Max went to the office the next morning he found that Delane had arrived before him. He was amazed at the appearance of his partner. He looked old and worn and very tired. Although as neatly dressed as ever—in fact, to-day rather more carefully put together than was his custom during business hours—he showed all the marks of recent dissipation. Max knew that his partner drank and more heavily during the past year than he used to, as so

many moderate drinkers of the old days were going in for the thing with a determination not to be frustrated by Federal laws and prohibition agents; but he had never seen him really intoxicated. His lack of animation and the expression of his face explained quite clearly his absence of the past few days. He hardly seemed the man Max had known; and his casual greeting and the way he turned immediately to some papers on his desk was not at all like the old genial and always high-spirited Jim.

"Any news since I have been away?" Max asked.

"Nothing of importance," Delane replied. "I have been out of town myself. Ask Benton." Benton was the head man at the office now and looked after the details connected with Greenvale affairs.

Max took Benton into his private office and had a long consultation with him. The matters in New York having to do with an issue of bonds which the Greenvale Holding Company was putting out had to be gone over rather carefully. When he was through with Benton, he found that Delane had gone out and was not expected back until after luncheon. This was all very queer, as on any other occasion Delane would have been eager to talk with him and discuss the latest developments in their business.

He seems to be avoiding me, Max thought, as he picked up his hat to go out. In the hallway he ran into Susan Anderton. He was rather startled when he saw her, thinking she might bring bad news of Florence. Susan very seldom came to his office.

But her assertion that she was looking for Delane put an end to his fears.

"Come out to lunch with me," Max said. "You won't find Jim in there now."

"Thank you, I have had my luncheon. I will wait until Delane returns," upon which Susan disappeared into the offices at the end of the hall.

Max was now becoming disturbed in no uncertain way. That Susan should seek Delane during business hours, apparently having some message to give or receive from him, was certainly odd. It almost took his appetite away. He felt in a hurry to be back to see what was going on between his partner and his sister's friend. Susan was perplexed too at running into Max; for she had designed to avoid him if possible by going to his office at the time he probably would be out.

Several things had happened at the house since he left that morning which made her visit necessary. Mrs. Potter, quite upset, more talkative than ever and more hopelessly bewailing her task with the girls, had arrived all in a flutter and stated her troubles to Susan, closeted with that lady in the third-story room. Gracie had disappeared; had vanished into space, as Mrs. Potter expressed it, having left the Greenvale flat on the same day Florence was taken sick. Mrs. Potter had tried to get Mrs. Wainwright at once by telephone; but when she found what the state of affairs was in the Kendall home, she had delayed making known her troubles, hoping that Gracie would return or Mrs. Wain-

wright would soon be able to see her and advise as to what she should do. But Florence did not improve and Gracie stayed away. Then it was that Mrs. Potter had taken the matter into her own hands and sought Susan. She seemed to be thoroughly annoyed and upset that things had happened just as she said she knew they would. She had been certain the girls would break loose some time or other and asked Miss Anderton if that had not been her opinion also.

"Hardly," Susan replied; "I had sufficient faith to rent the flat. Where do you think the girl is?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Mrs. Potter said. "One morning Delane called her up; at noon she went out to get a little air, telling Tommy that she would return immediately. She has not been seen or heard from since. It is really too dreadful," the poor lady wailed. "Of course, we can't say a word to Mrs. Wainwright until she is better. How is the dear soul getting on?"

"She is gaining, although far from well," Susan answered. "But she must know nothing of this."

The connection of Delane with Gracie's disappearance was perfectly apparent to Susan, especially as Max had told her the night before that his partner had not been in the office for several days. Florence's disapproval of his attentions to Gracie and Tommy also came to mind. Then it was that Susan decided to seek him out; to lay her cards on the table, if necessary, and see what his next play would be.

She had waited in the private office about half an hour before he put in an appearance. He impressed Susan very much as he had Max earlier in the morning. He was looking extremely bad; and Susan's usual friendly greeting was returned in a cold manner. Delane's "And what can I do for you, Miss Anderton?" was distinctly in contrast to his former style.

"I have come to do something for you," Susan replied in her most cheerful way. "Here is your cardcase which you may have missed." And she took out of her bag the little black leather case which she had found.

Delane looked utterly dismayed when he saw it and rather confused. He felt in his various pockets and then said, "No, I haven't missed it. Where did you find it?"

"On the floor at Mrs. Wainwright's."

"Oh, I must have dropped it when I was leaving the other night," he went on.

"Certainly," Susan said. "It was over by the fireplace near the sofa in the living room."

Delane looked at her very quickly and sharply; then he started to laugh but almost immediately became serious again.

"Thank you very much for bringing it to me," he said. "But you scarcely need to have put yourself to that trouble. I could have got it when I came up to the house."

"But it is hard to tell when that will be," Susan interrupted. "Florence is very ill, you know."

If a bomb had been exploded in the room, Delane could not have looked more surprised than he did at this announcement. His face got very red; he muttered something about "being so sorry to hear it," and then became silent.

"Yes," Susan went on, "Florence caught a very bad cold the night you brought her up to town."

"So it is only a cold then," Delane said, surprised and relieved.

"Not entirely. She is suffering from attacks of hysteria which neither the doctor nor any one else can explain."

"Those things are often very hard to account for," Delane put in.

"Yes, very baffling," Susan replied; "for usually the cause is hard to get at. Did Florence appear quite all right the night you saw her?"

"Yes; so far as I know. She was very tired, of course. The ride in the open car was disagreeable; about the worst storm I have struck in a long time. It was rotten luck that I had'nt come down to the shore in my limousine. You have not seen my new Pierce, have you?"

"No, I think not. But you say Mrs. Wainwright seemed all right when you got her home?"

"Oh, yes, she was all right beyond being pretty wet; but I tried to cover the distance as fast as possible. We even stopped for dinner on the road to avoid the worst part of the storm. But it was nasty and cold all the way."

"It is so unusual for Florence to be ill; especially

the way she is now," Susan said. "We can make nothing of it."

"I am terribly sorry. I must send her some flowers. Has she any preference?"

"I think any sort of flowers are cheering when one is ill," Susan replied, showing no indication of leaving.

Delane was most evidently eager that she should go. He got up, went to the door, looked out into the hall, and then came back and stood near Miss Anderton.

"You must excuse me if I leave you now," he said. "I have rather pressing matters to attend to."

"I should think you might," Susan said, laughing; "when you are able to disappear into the country for three or four days at a time, while Max is in New York."

Delane, who had started across the room, stopped short and looked back at Susan. He did not like the way she spoke to him; the sort of attitude she was taking with him and the manner which suggested that she knew about certain things which he wished to keep dark. Her rather sarcastic remark about going to the country was the last straw.

"I am sure I can go where I please without asking your leave," he said impatiently.

"Look here, Jim Delane," Susan interrupted. "You and I are good pals—at least, we always have been; and it is up to you whether we continue so. I don't care how often you go to the country. In fact, I invited you to stay with me at the shore; but

I would like to ask you where Gracie Linton is."

"Gracie Linton?" he managed to say at last, in a surprised tone. "Oh, you mean the Gracie out at Greenvale—the girl in the flat."

"Yes; the girl that *was* in the flat."

"Why, isn't she there now?"

If the tone Delane took were all deception, and he was fencing to gain time, then Susan thought he did it pretty well. But she was not to be discouraged by his assumed surprise and innocence.

"I thought that perhaps you could tell me where she is," Susan said suddenly. "You can behave as you please with girls of the Gracie sort, or any other kind so far as I am concerned. I did not come back to America to be the moral guardian of young men. The lord knows there are enough people doing that kind of thing. But I will not have you upsetting my friend's pet scheme and all her plans for those girls by kidnapping one of them."

Delane began to laugh and sat down opposite Miss Anderton.

"You have great imagination," he said, after a moment.

"Thank you for the compliment," Susan replied. "But in some cases where facts are at hand, imagination is not required. For instance, chairs overturned; disorder everywhere; your cardcase on the floor, and sofa pillows thrown about are rather too evident to need any fancy to dress them up."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Delane said vehemently.

"You will know before I get through," Susan went on. "You made me your confidante once. There is no reason why you should not be honest with me now and make a clean breast of it."

Just at that moment Max opened the door and stepped into the room. He had heard Susan's last remark. He looked utterly dumfounded, and came up quickly between Delane and Miss Anderton.

"You two people appear very serious," he said. "What is it that Jim should make a clean breast of?"

"Miss Anderton has let her imagination run wild," Delane said, trying to laugh. "Perhaps if you talk with her, you can find out what she is driving at. It is beyond me."

"Come into my office," Max said to Susan, as he led the way out.

Closeted with him, Susan proceeded to tell what had happened at Greenvale. How Gracie had disappeared and how everything connected with it pointed to Delane having a hand in the matter.

"This is very bad," Max said. "But I am sure you are mistaken."

"Of course I have no proofs," Susan replied. "I suppose you know that Delane has been out to see the girls a great deal. That he helped them to get settled in Greenvale, and ever since they have been there he has often taken them to ride, has gone to the 'movies' with them, and showed them one little attention after another. It troubled Florence, and she spoke to me about it. She said that although she was glad to have a man on the horizon to keep

the girls contented, she was sorry Delane was the gentleman in the trousers. She would have preferred Rothwell. Unfortunately Hubert has been out of town; but I think he would not find much amusement in dancing attendance upon the Greenvale ménage."

"I was wondering where he was, and why he had not appeared on the scene since Florence's illness," Max put in.

"Yes; he is off now on a yachting trip with some English friends of his who have been staying down near me. He will be gone several weeks," Susan went on to explain, "and I am sure will be terribly sorry when he gets back to hear what has happened. But as to Greenvale. Delane has been far too intimate with the girls. A few days ago—the day after the scene at your house—Gracie disappeared and has not been heard from since. That same day Delane telephoned her early in the morning and, from what Mrs. Potter was able to overhear, evidently made an appointment with her. He vanished at the same time and has not been seen until to-day. The whole thing is as simple as an arithmetical problem. You know how vague he was to you as to his whereabouts in the country. Mrs. Potter is frightfully disturbed; and of course we can say nothing to Florence. I have taken the matter into my own hands. I will not stand by and see the Greenvale scheme wrecked, so that when your sister recovers she will find the little flat broken up and her girls fallen into their old ways."

Max looked very serious and was silent a moment.

"You said 'the scene at my house.' What did you mean by that?"

"Oh, I meant nothing definite," Susan replied. "I know nothing definite; but considering Delane's infatuation for Florence and the appearance of the living room on the day after he brought her up to town, I have been led to suppose that there was some sort of a scene between them."

Max jumped up quickly and began to pace up and down the room.

"Do you mean to say that Jim ever told Florence that he loved her?"

"Of course. Didn't you know that he told her last summer down at my place at the time of the picnic?"

"Know! How should I know?"

"I supposed Florence had told you. Delane gave me a detailed account of it. In fact, I surprised them together in the middle of a scene on the beach. Oh, Delane has been hard hit in the matter of Florence."

"I always felt there was something going on in his mind about her. But this is ridiculous, absurd!" Max exclaimed. "I won't have him making love to my sister. And you mean that you think something of the same sort occurred in my house the other night?"

"I am very sure that something occurred, but I should say of a more vehement sort than anything before," Susan retorted.

"If I thought," Max said suddenly, then stopped short, glaring down at Susan. "No, I won't believe it," he said at last.

He had always been a little distrustful of Susan. He had never liked the way she meddled with other people's affairs. Like European diplomacy, Miss Anderton was rather too complicated for the simple mind of Kendall. Why should he listen to her now? Why should he not believe that she was merely hatching up some plot to pull Delane and himself apart? Perhaps she had quarrelled with Delane and had a personal motive in her suspicions and the story she was telling.

"I couldn't help but believe something," Susan continued, when she saw that Max remained silent. Then she told him just how things looked the morning she came to Marlborough Street.

"Let me talk with Jim," Max said, starting out of the room. "I won't have such things happening, if what you say is true."

"Of course I can't accuse him of anything," Susan said hurriedly. "But there is certainly something very queer going on. There can be no doubt about that; and I thought you ought to know, especially in reference to the Greenvale matter."

Susan was alarmed for fear she had said too much. She often had got herself into difficulties by saying more than she intended; but the present occasion seemed one when silence was not the best policy, even if possible at all. If Delane were misbehaving with Gracie and had offended Florence in

any way, it was better that Max should know it now than later.

"Let me talk with Jim," was all Max said, as he went out.

CHAPTER XVII

Delane had gone into the large office which the two men used for their conferences with contractors and builders, and Max found him there after he left Susan. He was not sure what tone he should take. If what Susan said were true, then it would be necessary that he should come quickly to some point in the matter. It was hard for him to believe Susan; yet allowing for her exaggeration, he could see that certain things were going strangely and that Delane's behavior was not at all what he had been accustomed to. In short, he knew there was something which he must find out, but he little realized the seriousness of the situation.

"What has that woman been telling you?" Delane said, as Max came in.

"Perhaps you can guess, or know already."

"I know she is lying, if she is trying to discredit me with you."

"Look here, old man," Max said, sitting down at his desk; "we can't get anywhere if you are going to fly off in a temper at the very first word I say."

"No one is flying off in a temper; but I won't have Susan Anderton, or any other busybody, coming down here and filling your ears with a lot of rubbish."

"Just answer me one question," Max interrupted quite calmly.

"Fire away; but I don't just see why I should be put in the witness stand for you."

"Take it that way if you wish," Max said, as calmly as ever; "it will make it easier for me to find out what I want to know."

"Well, what do you want to find out?"

"Did you ever tell Florence that you loved her?"

"Yes, of course I did," Delane replied quickly. "It was down at the shore last summer, the time Susan was giving her picnic. Your sister seemed to be frightened by what I said and hurried away from me, saying that you should never know anything about it. Of course, that has made it necessary for me to keep quiet on the subject."

"Did you ever speak to her again on the matter?"

"Yes—and no," Delane said, rather confused. "I told her a few days ago that I felt just the same, and that I hoped some time she would get to like me better."

"You know that is impossible."

"I don't see why."

"Simply because she doesn't love you and never could. But was that all you said?" Max went on.

"On the night I brought her up to town, I tried to talk to her a little about it when we were having dinner."

"Then when you got home, I suppose you went into the house?"

"Yes; I went in, for Florence asked me to have a

bite of supper. We were both cold and wet and rather done up after the ride. I don't know when I have been so tired."

"And you said nothing whatever that night of your love for her?"

There was a dead silence. Delane looked down at the floor, then out of the window. Finally he said quite slowly, "No; I said nothing; there was no chance to."

"Is that the truth?" Max asked, looking at him very seriously.

"See here," Delane exclaimed, jumping up from his chair, "what right have you got to cross-examine me in this way? If I love your sister, haven't I a perfect right to? Don't you think I am as good as any other man who comes along and throws himself at her feet? She wouldn't have minded a little bit if Rothwell had made love to her. I suppose you know that she is dead gone on him. And how do we know who he is,—some damned English adventurer, I suppose, trying to pick up a fortune in America."

It was Kendall's turn to be excited. "I won't have you talking about Florence in this way or saying such things about one of her friends,—about one of my friends. But you have just the same as admitted that you thrust yourself upon her, that you took advantage of the situation of being alone with her there at night. I don't know what you said to her, I don't much care; but I feel pretty sure of the sort of answer she made you. The point is that you

had her at a disadvantage and took that occasion to talk about your love for her."

"What if I did? Haven't I a right to love whom I please; and haven't I a right to talk about it like any other man? I have been crazy about Mrs. Wainwright ever since the first time I saw her. Nora could tell you that and of the way I talked of nothing else after that night you brought me to your house a year ago. And my love for her has been growing all this time. Well, then, how could you expect me to be with her, so near her all that afternoon and evening when we rode up to town together, without saying something? Who are you to tell me whom I am to love and how I shall behave?"

"There is one thing I can tell you pretty definitely, that when you are in my house, you have got to behave like a gentleman; and if you don't, you must answer to me."

"Who says I didn't behave like a gentleman?" Delane went on hurriedly, losing his temper more completely with every word he uttered.

"Susan and I know nothing of what actually happened," Max replied. "But Susan saw the condition of the living room the next morning; and I have seen Florence in one of her attacks of hysteria, and I have been told by the nurse how she cries 'Let me go' and calls out your name. Does all this have no bearing on the subject? Do you take me for a fool?"

Delane had grown rather pale at Kendall's last

remark and stood leaning on his desk. He straightened up suddenly.

"I tell you I won't have you meddling with my affairs," he almost shouted. "I was good enough for you; my money was very convenient; my money made you. And now, because I have happened to take a fancy to your sister and tell her so, as any real man would do, you turn on me as though I were some low-down rowdy."

Max saw how hopeless the scene between them was becoming.

"Please be reasonable," he said, still holding himself in hand. "Let's talk this thing over and see just where we stand."

"I don't have to talk my affairs over with you to know where I stand," Delane retorted. "And I think I know pretty well where you stand if my help is taken away."

The threat was not lost upon Kendall, but he made no answer. It was merely the frothing at the mouth of a man who was very angry.

"Do you think I am going along with you in this Greenvale business, if you say I have no right to approach your sister on a matter which is nearer my heart than anything in the world? I have always loved her,—I adored her. I did everything I could to make her see it. I handled her with kid gloves; I talked fine nonsense. I went on for months before I ever said a word to her, before I ever let her know that she was different to me from any other girl. And then, when I had a good chance

last summer, I spoke to her and told her just how things stood. I swear to you that there was nothing wrong in what I said or did; but she looked at me as though I were crazy, as if I were some barbarian who was going to run off with her. Then we were interrupted, and Florence hurried up to the house. There was no other chance for a long time to say anything. I thought of coming and laying the whole matter before you; but I knew that would do no good. Then I hoped that perhaps Florence would feel differently when she saw that my devotion was sincere. Finally events threw us together in a very close and intimate way. The ride to town; the little dinner together, and the dark house—"

"When you forgot yourself," Max interrupted.

"Call it what you like," Delane said quickly. "I tell you I have a right to my feelings. If you don't think me good enough to make love to your sister, then you are not good enough to do business with me. You and Florence always act as if you were not quite sure of me when we meet outside of our business relations."

"That is absurd," Max put in. "You know I have always been your friend and stood up for you on every occasion."

"That's all very well. You admired my brains and liked my business ability. You needed some one like me to make the approach to the shrewd men we have to deal with. You enjoyed seeing my cleverness used to turn your land into dollars; but the feeling of stand-offishness was there all the

same. I saw it and Nora saw it. We were not your kind. It was all right to use us and to have certain connections with us; but as to social equality,—that was an entirely different matter. Why have you never entertained Nora and me at your house? Why have you never taken us about with you, if I was the pal you said I was? It was because we were different; were not of your set, and you couldn't mix up your fine name with Irish millionaires who were not set down in your damned Blue Book. For I tell you that's what I am, a millionaire; and I could buy out your interest in this Greenvale scheme so quick that you would not know you had turned over in your sleep. I had the misfortune to love your sister, and I had the courage to show it,—to show it as any one else would have done with red blood in his veins. I am not one of you swells who make your proposals for marriage like an invitation to dinner and then enter into childless marriages."

"I won't listen to you when you speak like this," Max cried. "You are talking a lot of rubbish, and you don't know what you are saying." He paused a moment. Then asked, "But just how do you reconcile your affair with Gracie Linton after boasting of all this devotion to Mrs. Wainwright?"

"Gracie Linton! Now you're on that, are you?" Delane exclaimed. "How much longer are you going to preach morals to me and tell me what I shall do and shall not do? It is about time I turned the spotlight on your private life."

By this time Delane had quite lost control of himself. He was talking like an insane man.

"So Susan has been filling your ears with the Gracie business. Well, what has she got on me there? What proofs has she got that I have been doing anything to the Linton girl? Miss Anderton makes a fine detective for you, doesn't she? She had better go into the thing and not waste her precious time on me. Of course, if you care to have people in Greenvale like those two girls she took the flat for, all right; but I don't, and go they must. If Gracie has flown the coop, so much the better. A pretty time she must have had out there with that old cackling hen of a Mrs. Potter to watch and spy on her every movement. Somebody ought to form a society to save the poor from the social workers."

"If you had any regard for Florence," Max said, "you would not talk this way; and if you consider her wishes at all, you won't disturb the girls."

"What regard should I have for Florence when she has turned me down, and when you go after me the way you are doing? What regard should I have for either of you, if you can't trust me?"

"That is just it," Max put in. "I thought I could trust you. I supposed you were my pal, my friend; but I see you in your true colors now. I realize that what Florence said was true."

"There you are," Delane shouted. "She never liked me. She was always telling you how far beneath you I was and filling you with her own dis-

like and distrust of me. I wonder we have got on as well as we have for so long. But I am through with your sister. You need have no fear of me on that score. As for Gracie Linton,—that is none of your affair."

"So you admit it," Max exclaimed.

"I admit nothing," Delane replied. "You're a fine fellow, aren't you," he went on, rather more quietly, "to talk all this business of love-making to me, when you have nearly reached your fortieth year and are still unmarried. You probably have never loved or had a girl in your life."

"We won't discuss my personal affairs," Max said.

"Then we had better put the soft pedal on mine. Haven't I as much right to put the lid on my affairs as you have on yours? What if I do know where Gracie Linton is; what if I have had a hand in the matter; that's hardly anything for you to get hot under the collar about."

Max could not stand there any longer and hear this kind of talk. One thing was very evident; that Delane had done something he was sorry for and was trying to brave the thing out with all the swagger he could command.

"I have only one more thing to say," Max remarked, as he started to go. "And that is that you must get Gracie back to Greenvale at once. You know where she is, I don't. It is up to you to save the situation. Good-by."

He returned to Susan and told her briefly the

outcome of his conversation. She agreed with Max that Delane's angry outburst and the harsh things he had said all pointed quite clearly to a guilty conscience. They walked home together, trying to find some way out of the tangle and worried by the effect it would have upon Florence when she should learn of what had happened to Gracie.

Meanwhile, Delane had hurried off in his large touring car to a little hotel in the country about thirty miles from Boston, where Gracie awaited him. She was a very different looking person from the young lady of a few weeks before. A rather copious supply of Delane's money had fitted her out with a number of attractive gowns; her hair was done with great care, and on the whole she presented a very much manicured appearance.

Of course, Delane said nothing about his conversation with Max or of Florence's illness; but Gracie knew by his manner that something had disturbed him. He was irritable and unwilling to talk to her; and would not listen when she proposed going in town to the theatre. During the evening she worried about Tommy, thinking she ought to let her know where she was, send some word to her, or call her up by telephone.

"Go ahead," Delane said rather brutally. "Get in touch with Greenvale, if you want to; but you know what the result will be. The Kendall crowd will be down on us in full force if they find out where you are. Please be sensible," he said, after a moment. "Do just as I tell you, and everything

will be all right. Aren't you happy out here with me?"

"Of course I am," Gracie said, coming over to him. "Ain't I liked you ever since the day you brought Tommy the chocolates at the hospital? You know Greenvale was fierce. I think I prefer Umber's Restaurant and a room in an attic to Mrs. Potter and morality. Why, it was almost as bad as it used to be at home."

Delane laughed at this and drew Gracie to him. The fact that they were together in this way so soon after the night at Florence's house and what Delane had said then of his eternal devotion was really not so strange as it seemed. He had taken a great fancy to Gracie the first time he saw her at the hospital after the accident to Tommy. He had kept in close touch with the girls during their life at the flat. He had always had some one of this sort on his books; that is, until Florence had come into his life. Then for a long time, on account of what he thought was a really deep love for her, he behaved himself pretty well, so far as women were concerned. He had all those fine ideas which people of his type indulge in when it seems to them that a lasting love has transformed the world. He lived with this thought constantly in his mind; he went on with the idea that some day he would win Florence. Then when all he had hoped for fell flat, when in his passion he saw that he had overstepped the bounds of what a person may do, he dashed off in a rage to Gracie. His appearance as

something very definite in her life was not at all unexpected; for he had once asked her, on one of those numerous rides together, whether she did not think she could be happy with him. Of course, he did not mean marriage; but Gracie was hardly the person who needed any explanations on that score. She had answered rather merrily, "Set the time, old boy, and I will do the rest." This conversation had taken place soon after Susan told him how impossible it would ever be for him to win Florence. It is not at all certain, though, that he would not have taken the same attitude toward Gracie if his suit with Florence had been more promising. There was nothing difficult or inconsistent, to his mind, in reconciling the two matters. Certain people have the faculties of the chameleon in the matter of the affections. As things turned out, when he found that Florence and her class live and breathe in a different atmosphere from his own, he had flown in utter desperation to the arms of the girl who would give him all and more than he desired.

Gracie continued to worry about Tommy; and the next morning, after Delane had gone out, she telephoned to the Greenvale flat. She was able to talk with Tommy and to tell her somewhat briefly where she was and with whom she was living. She made her swear that she would say nothing of all this to Mrs. Potter. Then Tommy told her friend of Mrs. Wainwright's illness, which news was received quite calmly; whereupon Tommy reproved Gracie for the way she had run off. She ended the

conversation by sending her regards to Jim, which remark Mrs. Potter, who had transformed herself just outside the door into a living statue in a listening attitude, overheard.

That settled the correctness of her suspicions. Delane had kidnapped Gracie, just as she had supposed. The point which the statue had not been able to discover was where were they and what should she do? A visit from Miss Anderton, who came out to the flat to see how things were going, solved the situation rather quickly. Susan had a very convincing way with people when she wished to find out something. After learning from Mrs. Potter that Gracie was somewhere with Delane, Susan took Tommy in hand; and in the course of an hour, during which time she was obliged to listen to many lies and to beat about the bush in her most desperate manner, she had the whole story and started off for town. An interview with Max followed, after which several things happened which caused him to make up his mind to a quite definite line of action.

CHAPTER XVIII

The first of these things was the appearance in one of the evening newspapers of the following headline:

BACK BAY LADY'S SCHEME FAILS

As a sub-heading came this:

FALLEN GIRLS PROVE POOR PROPOSITION

Below was a half-column account of Florence's Greenvale venture, telling of her interest in social welfare work and what she had attempted on her own account with two girls in the country. Although no names were mentioned, the tone of the article was decidedly offensive.

"One of these girls," it went on to say, "has disappeared recently, evidently wishing to hit the high spots after a period of country quiet. The lady herself, who stood sponsor for these unfortunate girls, is ill and confined to her bed, unable to stand the strain of seeing her pet scheme in social welfare work fall to pieces. Residents of the new and promising suburb of Greenvale are highly indignant that such a doubtful venture should have been attempted in their midst. People with families of decent lives can hardly be expected to put up with

this sort of thing. However, Mr. James Devlin Delane, one of Boston's leading business men and organizer, and the largest stockholder of the Greenvale Holding Company, assures the residents of Greenvale that the flat which housed these girls from the slums will be taken over by him, and that they need have no further fear that the reputation of this beautiful suburb will be jeopardized by such wild schemes as this of the Back Bay lady, belonging to one of Boston's oldest families, whose faith in sunshine and fresh air was rather greater than her knowledge of human nature."

All that day Florence had shown decided improvement, had begun to take an interest in things; and to-night was the first time since she was taken sick that she had asked for the newspaper. Of course the headline about the Back Bay lady struck her eye at once. She read farther, scarcely believing that what she saw was true. She almost felt that her mind must have become affected, and that she was imagining things. But there was the cold print with all the brutality of abbreviated statement in which newspapers of a certain type are so pleased to indulge. When the nurse came into the room, she found Mrs. Wainwright pale and trembling. She asked to see Max at once.

"It's Delane, Delane, at the bottom of this," she cried, as her brother stood by her bedside. She handed him the paper. "What a beast," she went on. "Can't he let me alone? Hasn't he done enough already? Wasn't it enough for him to

have me at his mercy the other night without bringing this new shame upon me?"

Then she lost control of herself. She threw herself upon Max's sympathy, the only thing she had to uphold her now; and in his arms made a complete confession of all that had happened. The vow she made that terrible night that Max should never know, that no one must ever know, went for nothing in this moment of weakness and disappointment. The nurse had been sent out of the room, and Florence told her brother everything, without trying to cover up any of the details of the scene in the darkened house. Max was so angry, felt suddenly such a bitter hatred toward Delane, that he could scarcely hold himself in hand until he should get at the man who had so insulted his sister and was now, by this venomous newspaper report, dragging her name through the dirt. For of course people would know or find out very soon who the "Back Bay lady" was. Florence had had evidence at the committee meeting of the way in which her venture was being discussed. It would not take long for persons outside the circle of social service work to pick up the threads of her connection with the Greenvale business, especially as her brother was associated with Delane. But to Max, all this was as nothing compared with that unforgivable scene when Delane had played the brute with Florence.

This, coming immediately after Susan's report on the Greenvale situation, caused Max to decide that he and Delane must separate—that it would be intoler-

erable to continue in business with such a man as a partner. The difficulty, which he could see quite clearly but which had no effect upon his decision, was that Delane held the upper hand, was in control of the finances in Greenvale operations. Max's withdrawal from the scheme might mean his ruin. This was as plain as daylight to him.

When he had become associated with Delane, the hundreds of acres of land which he owned were encumbered with mortgages up to the last dollar of their value. Delane, in order to make sure of his security in going ahead with the venture, had paid off these mortgages and taken over the title to the land. Max was to share with him in the profits which would come with the development of the place. Of course, if he withdrew now, Delane would buy out his interest; but this interest would be a small part of what might be his should he continue with the Greenvale business. It was now at the beginning of its prosperity. In ten years Max would probably be a rich man. So his withdrawal at this time, while it did not mean total financial ruin, certainly did mean the blasting of his hopes of success in the future, not only in relation to Greenvale but from other ventures of a like nature which he and Delane had proposed making together. Withdrawal, however, at any odds, was the only course open to Max. He would feel that he had lost his very soul if he should remain associated with such a man as his partner had proved himself to be. With such a moral background what could Max

ever expect in the way of business honor or integrity? Looking back on all their dealings together, he could scarcely see how it had been possible for him to go heart and soul into the venture with Delane. Now that he had shown himself clearly, Max could never see him in any other light. Perhaps the old Kendall pride rose up within him. Certainly anger and pride were combined in what he felt now after hearing his sister's story and after knowing the relationship which existed between Delane and Gracie. It was his sense of honor, which according to his standards was the very basis of life, which rebelled. How necessary it often was, he thought, in order to succeed in these days, to trample honor under foot and not be over-scrupulous about one's soul.

He said nothing to Florence of what was in his mind. He quieted her as best he could, told her he would find Gracie and get her back to Greenvale, and that he would do nothing rash in his treatment of Delane. All of which was more easily promised than carried out. He had few hopes of being able to accomplish anything with the Linton girl. He had never been very optimistic as to what could be done with people of that sort. The results had shown that he was right. But he did interview the newspaper which had published the scurrilous article; and threatened action of some sort if another word were said in its sheets of the home for fallen girls. The editor quite frankly told him that his source of information had been through a reporter who

had picked up the story and wished to make of it as startling a bit of news as possible. This reporter Max knew to be an acquaintance of Delane. In fact, he was one of Miss Nora's young friends; and the venom of the article could be traced to the balked social aspirations of that young woman.

To announce to Delane that he was through with him, that he was stepping out of Greenvale matters and would accept any terms of withdrawal which could be arranged, was the hardest part of his decision to perform. After working constantly and at close quarters with Delane for a year and a half, it was no easy thing to adjust oneself to the new attitude. Max could never again have anything but the most intense dislike and disgust for his former associate; but he would be obliged to see him, to announce his intention, and then through his lawyers come to some understanding on the financial questions involved. This was all going to be confoundedly unpleasant, as Max admitted to himself. He was at a loss even how and where to begin. For the present he stayed away from his office, claiming Florence's illness as his excuse.

Delane made frantic attempts to get him by telephone. Then he sent him telegrams, requesting his advice on some business matter; and finally, after getting no satisfaction from these messages, wrote a letter in which he rather lamely apologized for having lost his temper the other day and hoping that Mrs. Wainwright was recovered from her recent illness.

"What do you make of the man?" Max said to Susan. "He seems to feel that we can go on just the same after what has happened and apparently has no idea that I will not forget his behavior."

"He is hard—hard like so many of the men to-day," Susan replied. "I tell you these great business ventures undertaken by our young men, in which the motto is 'the devil take the hindmost,' are killing their finer feelings. America to-day fairly glitters with her quickly made millions, and the expression behind that glitter of gold is a cold, soulless stare. You have only to walk down the streets in New York to see what I mean."

"I know," Max sighed. After a time he said, "Perhaps I was never made for the game; perhaps it is just as well for me to get out now before I am bowled over by one of the high-handed schemes of such men as Delane."

"There are two worlds here," Susan went on. "The old order of people like you and Florence, who flatter yourselves by thinking you are modern; and the new world of the Delanes. Can they mix; can they work together? That is the question. You thought you had solved it by allying yourself with Delane and his great money-making scheme. You have not been beaten, but you have seen that you do not belong there. You had high hopes. They have not failed; you only misplaced them. You will have enough to live on. You need not worry on that score. Florence can easily pick up again the threads of her work and forget there ever

were two worthless girls before whom she placed high ideals. It will all come right in the end."

Susan spoke hopefully; but Max was troubled. He dreaded the business of his withdrawal from the Greenvale Company. He knew the difficulties Delane would throw in his way as to the details of the thing. He was dubious about Florence's state of mind when she should know that he had broken with Delane, feeling, as she was bound to, that she had been the cause of it all. Happily Florence continued to improve every day. After the first shock of knowing that her attempts for Gracie had gone for nothing and that the little household in Greenvale must be given up, she gained strength and seemed more like herself. The fact that Max shared her knowledge of Delane's conduct toward her was probably the saving of the situation. With him she could face anything. The nerve specialist who had been called in to examine her had said at the outset that something was haunting and troubling her; that just as soon as she could be made to confess or confide in some one what it was, all would be well. The fatal headlines in the newspaper had brought this about.

Then Rothwell returned to town from his yachting trip; and perhaps his appearance did more for Florence in the way of a cure than anything which had happened. Rothwell, on his part, was aware of a certain charm and beauty of appeal which she held for him quite different from anything he had felt before. Not that he had ever failed to see her

charm; but now her personality touched him more closely. One afternoon they sat chatting together, Florence propped up in a big chair in the sun and Rothwell facing her as she sat framed in the bay window through which the long straight street ran out into the golden dusty vista of the late afternoon. She seemed so helpless, so ready for the least bit of encouragement and sympathy, as she told him the story of Gracie's disappearance and what a beast Delane had been. Naturally she made no allusion to the particular scene which would ever remain a secret between herself and Max.

"You see, I often wondered, when Delane was seeing so much of the girls, if he were the right sort of man," she said. "I tried to get help from you; but you were vague."

"But I told you what the events have proved to be the truth," Hubert replied.

"You said he was an 'outsider.'"

"Yes; one never knows what such a person will do. Therefore, it is best not to take them too seriously."

"It is rather like me to take people seriously. Perhaps that is why I am so often disillusioned."

She went on to tell him how Susan was going to Greenvale to close up the flat which she had rented for the girls and would bring Mrs. Potter into town to be her housekeeper. Tommy, it seems, had joined Gracie somewhere; and neither of them had sent any word to Mrs. Wainwright.

"There's gratitude for you," Hubert exclaimed.

But Florence did not care to talk longer of the girls or of Greenvale. She said all that was over, so far as she was concerned, and that whatever she did now in connection with her welfare work would be along the approved lines of the committee and special reports.

"The world is still in its swaddling clothes of red tape," she went on. "It is tiresome to have it so; but individual effort is a difficult matter, and the person you try to help is too often a poor proposition. However, I shall always feel certain that Gracie would not have run away if I had been on deck at the critical moment. We won't talk of it, though," she added. "It is a closed book."

No further mention of Delane was made. When Rothwell left he promised to call the next day to find out how the invalid was getting on. Susan had told him that something quite apart from the Gracie episode had happened between Florence and Delane; but with her meager knowledge of the affair she could say nothing definite. He could see, however, by the way Florence had spoken of Delane, that she held some more bitter hatred toward him than the rather sensational escapade of the Linton girl could have caused by itself. So he was not very surprised when the news came a few days later that Kendall had broken with his partner and had stepped out of Greenvale affairs.

Max had come in one afternoon, and finding Florence downstairs for the first time since her illness, had taken her in his arms and drawn her into his

study. There he told her that he was through with Greenvale, that he had sold out his interest, and that his slate was clean so far as land ventures went. In short, he was out of the business; it was no more for him. Florence could not speak for a moment. She felt that she must weep, perhaps at the happiness of knowing her brother was no longer to be associated with Delane; but more especially in thinking that it was because of her that Max's brilliant business career had gone smash.

"And all because of me, all because of your sister," she murmured.

Max held her closer. He told her how his lawyers had carried out the business with Delane for him. How he had been obliged to see him only twice during the transactions, and how Delane had settled with him for a very tidy sum which represented all of his claims in Greenvale at the present stage of its development.

Florence heard all this without comment. Finally she said, "It would have been different, wouldn't it, if I had given myself to him? If I only could have—"

But Max stopped her words with a resounding kiss. That was the last thing, he said, which she must ever think of, that she must ever suggest to herself. Better to have stepped out penniless into the world than have her hold such thoughts.

The matter of breaking with Delane had been somewhat easier than Max had anticipated; for Delane had a friend, an Irishman older than himself,

who had been for several years an important factor in the politics of the city, and who wished to come into the company. In fact, with this man Delane would be able to proceed in his schemes with a certain recklessness which never had been possible as long as the conservative Kendall upheld the other end of the partnership. Besides, what wouldn't he do with politics behind him and with a brilliant member of the political crew then in power as his associate in the Greenvale Holding Company. Somewhat more dazzling vistas than ever before opened up to the keen eye of Delane, and he dropped Max with hardly a regret. Max had made him through his land, and he had tried to make Max through his clever manipulation of that land; but they were never meant for each other, he told Kendall's lawyers, and he could navigate his ship quite well without him. All of which was exactly to Kendall's purpose. It eliminated the possibility of law suits to recover his interests, and recriminations, and no one could say what intricacies of slander and mischief-making.

Something like a storm had swept over the affairs of Kendall and his sister. They had been secure all their lives; and in his recent business success Max had felt he had caught the step of the men of his generation who were doing the big things in the world of finance. But now they were adrift, as perhaps so many of the older order are adrift in the tidal wave of modern life. What shore would they make?

CHAPTER XIX

If there is one institution more essentially Bostonian than another, one habit more firmly fixed upon the people than all the other habits and ways of doing things for which the city is justly famous, it is the "Pops." To the uninitiated in such matters it may be said that the "Pops" are a series of concerts given during the early summer months by the symphony orchestra in the hall where through the winter season this same group of musicians holds sway before Boston's music lovers. But the audience of the popular concerts in the summer is rather more heterogeneous.

At one of the tables near the stage on a certain evening of the spring following the autumn of incidents which have just been narrated, there might have been discovered a group of rather smartly dressed people—two ladies and two gentlemen. Laughing and talking and paying only a slightly bored attention to the music, this little party comprised Mrs. Wainwright, her brother Max, and their friends, Susan Anderton and Hubert Rothwell. Susan Anderton was the hostess of this group, and she was giving a party for her three friends, who were sailing soon for England.

"It is tragic that you are not coming with us,"

Florence was saying in one of the intermissions, when the waitresses hasten to make change and collect tips for the refreshments served during the evening, and the more suburban parts of the audience stare about to discover points of interest in their neighbors. The galleries, packed to the last seat, lean forward in long lines to look down through the smoke at the crowd on the floor; but the row of gray gods above, standing in their niches, avert their gaze, knowing that what they see holds none of the old joyousness of life which was upon the world before their doom had overtaken them to stand endlessly in museums or ornament the upper portions of halls of entertainment.

"It makes me quite homesick and ready to forget my uncle's millions," Susan said, in reply to her friend, "when I think of you starting off without me. But I shall follow later, just as soon as my wretched attorneys in New York think my rights are secured."

"It is hardly worth while coming into a legacy if it takes a lifetime to get it," Max put in.

After a winter of indecision on the part of Max and a rather long convalescence for Florence, it had been decided that they would go abroad; they would stay for a time in England, visiting some friends and possibly accepting Rothwell's invitation to come to his place in the country. Then they were to proceed, after the customary look-in on Paris, to Italy, where a friend of Kendall's boyhood lived at Santa Margherita. London and Paris interested

Max very little; but Italy, where he had spent many happy months when making the "grand tour" with his father, held out a certain prospect, in anticipation of which he had been persuaded by Florence to undertake the European trip. Rothwell, who knew that he had far outstayed his time in America, was going to sail with them.

Of course Susan went over to New York to see them off, the next best thing, she said, to going herself. There was the usual crowd of friends to wave good-by to the first big boatload of people to sail that spring for Europe. The Anglo-Americans who made their annual pilgrimage to England; the European enthusiasts who found everything genial in life on the other side of the Atlantic; the rather newly prosperous couples taking their first step from their native shore who would tell you on the steamer that you must see "God's country first" but who apparently preferred travel in wet foreign lands to journeys in search of scenery in their own dry domain,—all were there on the pier and hastening on board the big boat.

"Don't forget to send me a cable when you arrive," Susan called out, as the order for going ashore passed along the decks and she was saying good-by to her friends. The farewell passage with Hubert was far more casual than she had expected; and she wondered if he had really transferred his affections from her to her friend.

It would not be at all surprising to Susan if this had happened. Certainly she had done her best to-

ward that end, however slight had been any evidence which she could see as a result of her efforts. From the time Hubert had returned to Boston and found the Kendalls in the midst of the Delane catastrophe—Florence ill and Max bowled over by the sudden break in his business career—he had taken a new and decidedly lively interest in Mrs. Wainwright. All through the winter, when she had led the idle, carefree life of a semi-invalid, Hubert had been devoted in his attentions to her. She had never seemed so attractive, so much *en rapport* with him. Perhaps Florence's former constant labors, her rather definite attitude toward people and the small amount of time she could give to the essentially feminine things of life, had made it impossible for him to see her in her most likeable mood. At any rate, from his casual interest there had developed a real sympathy with her; and he had been much at the Kendalls' and had sat and talked with Florence for hours at a time, when she was still unable to go about. With the coming of spring, they had played golf together, had motored out into the country in a little car which Rothwell bought and was to pass over to Susan upon his departure from America. A real regard and fondness for Florence had come about, which perhaps was the next thing to love. But Rothwell had never said anything. He was not the sort to say anything until he was very sure of his own feelings, and perhaps he was slower in finding out what his sentiments were than are most people. Susan had looked on at all this with

ever-increasing pleasure; not wholly because that seemed to be happening which she had so long hoped for, but because she could feel Florence's happiness through it all and watch her growing love for Hubert.

While the boat was steaming far out of sight of land that soft spring afternoon, a girl strolled into Umber's Café just at the dull time of day which at places of this sort has in the springtime more of sadness and gloom than at any other time of the year. It was still light outside but inside the restaurant it was all shadow and murkiness. She was dressed rather more smartly than most of the women who came to Umber's; but her suit and hat looked slightly shabby, and Gracie Linton, the girl who wore them, looked tired and ill. Her entrance caused a mild sensation among the waitresses.

"Well, if that ain't Gracie!" one of them exclaimed.

"I guess the swell guy who put up for her has gone broke," another remarked, as she advanced slowly to the table where Gracie had sat down.

There was no effusive welcome at seeing her back in the well-known restaurant, but rather an attitude of disdain that she should have had the audacity to step out of her old haunts and then expect to be received again on her former footing. She had almost lost caste at Umber's. Of course, certain habitués of the place had known of her doings the past year, had heard vaguely of her as being somewhere in the country and been told of her life with

Delane. The only curiosity shown now was as to what had happened to her rich "gentleman friend." Gracie told her story quite briefly, but with the addition of several oaths as to the character of said gentleman friend who, it seems, had tired of her and thrown her over. It was like many other events narrated at the varnished tables of Umber's.

"But where is Tommy?" the head waiter of the pale face asked.

"I don't know," Gracie replied. "I guess she feels too good for me. The last time I heard from her was a letter I got in which she said she had gone to work in a factory in a small town. That after knowing Mrs. Wainwright she was through with the old stuff." Gracie paused to take a sip of pale half-per-cent beer. "I bet you before she has been there long she will find there is plenty of sporty life in the small town."

Several exclamations of surprise and disgust were uttered by the little group of waitresses who stood looking down at Gracie. Then they moved away to attend to the various patrons who were straggling in and taking their accustomed places amid the smell of stale smoke and food and dirt. Somewhere birds were probably singing in the freshness of the night, and boys and girls were wandering across green fields in the twilight; but there was no sign of this beyond the flickering blue light in the street that hovered outside the long windows of Umber's.

But far out in the starlit sea a steamer was plung-

ing along. People moved up and down the decks in the cool evening air. Inside, groups chatted while listening to the music of the orchestra; and elderly gentlemen smoked and played cards in the men's room and enjoyed their first drink of good Scotch in many months. Florence and Max were sitting together in the main saloon talking with some old Boston friends of whom they had seen very little during the past few years. Rothwell came and sat down with them.

"Shall we go out?" he said to Florence, after a time.

Florence put down a piece of knitting she was at work on and followed Hubert out to the deck. The night was clear; the heaven luminous with stars. They measured the length of the boat several times when Hubert suggested that they go up to the top deck, where they could see the stars and the sky without the annoyance of the light which streamed from the windows of the cabins.

On the upper deck they heard the wind singing in the rigging and watched the green and red lights far ahead dip and rise with the motion of the steamer. They went to the very front under the bridge. Up from the steerage came the song of a man, very indistinct and dreamlike as the wind carried the voice away from them. The heads of some men and women could be seen outlined faintly against the sea, looking out toward the east which meant home for them. The night was too cold for phosphorus on the water; but the waves

gleamed and spread out in white shimmering spray as the boat plunged on. The spray was like the reflection of the stars above.

"Down there," Florence said, leaning over the railing and looking into the steerage quarters, "they are all thinking of home. It makes me a little homesick, in spite of the fact that I am glad to go away. How many of those people, I wonder, have made a success in the new world."

"And do you know what I am thinking about?" Hubert said, turning toward his companion.

"Of home, too, I suppose," Florence replied, a little sadly.

"No; of what an idiot I have been all this past year."

"Isn't it rather myself who has been the idiot?" Florence broke in.

"I ought to have known," Hubert went on, "and I suppose I did know somewhere deep down in my heart, but was too great a fool to acknowledge it, that I have been falling in love with you."

Suddenly the voice of the man singing came up strong and clear from below, borne back to them on a turn of the wind; and to Florence all the world seemed singing, echoed in that rising voice and rushing through her heart like a great wave of happiness. All that she had hoped for so long, all that she had almost given up hoping for, came singing into her soul like a melody which the sea was sending up to her.

Just then came the sound of the ship's bells and

the call from far up in the forward mast, "All's well."

"Oh, Hubert, all is well; I love you," Florence was just able to murmur, as she was caught into Rothwell's arms and felt his kisses upon her mouth, and in those moments all the world seemed to slip away and only heaven was in her vision.

Later that evening, when they were returning to the ship's cabin, Hubert said, "When we reach Liverpool, we must send Susan a cable telling her what has happened."

"Yes; and then—" Florence said.

"Then we will be married."

FINIS



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